



the autobiography of **Enrico Arrigoni**

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Freedom: My Dream

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Enrico Arrigoni

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A note from the editors:

This edition of Enrico Arrigoni's *Freedom: my dream* is based on the original from the Libertarian Book Club. In preparing it, our aim has been double. We wanted an improved text that the interested general reader could engage without too much trouble; and we wanted to retain as much as possible of Arrigoni's style. These two aims were to some extent in conflict, and the present text is our attempt at a graceful compromise. Spelling errors, many grammatical inconsistencies, and other obvious mistakes have been silently emended. But we have left Arrigoni's charming mixed-up syntax, his occasionally obscure or archaic wording, and, what is perhaps his stylistic signature, the idiosyncratic use of the ellipsis (...) to signal or produce critical distance, irony, dramatic pause, and other, more subtle, usually humorous, effects. Like other polyglots, Arrigoni's intelligence shines through in his twists and turns in creating an English prose that retains traces of the many other languages he spoke.

Another approach would have been to republish the text in an edition identical to the Libertarian Book Club's first edition, with annotations (especially for the final section of Spanish war reporting). We did not do so because our aim is not principally archival; it is to get this entertaining, moving, and (we think) timely book into the hands of as many readers as possible.

❖Introduction❖

Through the centuries the misery of the masses has been described by philosophers, princes, priests, poets, and other types of humanitarians, but how many of these people went through this misery themselves? In these pages a real proletarian who in his childhood and youth lived through the bitterness of that misery will speak.

But please, let not goodhearted readers start inundating these pages with their tears, because the author will describe with a smile his sparse meals and infinite hours of toil since he was nine years old; at the time of his youth, and in the environment in which he lived, neither he nor the miserable masses were conscious that they were the victims of wickedness of men.

Alas! Human beings had lived like that for centuries, millennia, and misery was believed to be natural, our destiny, the divine will, and not the will of men or the malevolence of the Gods, even though we were assured from the pulpits that our sufferings were the punishment of the Divinity because our ancestors some six thousand years ago had eaten an apple against the will of God. In our childhood, in our innocence, it never occurred to us to ask the agents of the Divinity what fault was it of ours if our ancestors felt like eating that apple anyhow since at the time we were not even born?

In 1894, the year I was born, Pozzuolo Martesana, a small vil-

lage in the fertile Lombardy plain, just thirteen miles from the city of Milan, was inhabited mostly by peasants who lived very poorly, as few of them owned the land they worked. Among them were my grandparents on my father's side. If I was born the son of a tailor instead of a peasant it was purely accidental, as my father, when still a boy, went to eat some delicious cherries from a tree that, ah! didn't belong to his father's field. Surprised by the owner, to escape his fury, he came down from the tree a little too fast, and a rusty nail cut his leg very badly, rendering him unable to push a spade to till the soil. To earn a living, he became a tailor. And here, dear reader, don't think that I am accusing God of maliciously planting there that rusted nail in order to punish him.

Pozzuolo Martesana was a village of three short streets, three priests and two churches, one not in use for lack of sinners, I suppose. There were also various nuns whose main work was to be our second mothers, who as soon as we started to walk took care of us children during the day. In this way they would free our real mothers for making more children, the philosophy at that time for poor people being: the more children the better, as they were a kind of insurance against old age for the parents. My father and mother insured themselves with twelve children.

Although our village population was less than 3,000, we had the privilege of having a doctor, who was also the doctor of another village two kilometers away, the means of transportation being a bicycle the doctor used all year round and under all weather conditions. His fee for a visit or small operation was the fantastic sum of twenty centimos of a lira, equal to four cents of the dollar... when the patient had that much, which was very seldom. However, paying or not paying, everyone received the same service.

There was also a midwife, who took care of all the births at home, in our case in the room where we all slept, seven or eight of us, which was also our kitchen where we cooked and ate our meals.

Besides the doctor and the midwife, there were two teachers, if I remember well, our education stopping at our ripe age of nine

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with the third elementary class, since nine-year old boys and girls were considered old enough to go out in the world and earn their living.

I matured so fast that at the age of five I became a salaried working boy, serving the priest every morning at his first mass at six a.m. My parents considered it a great honor for the family, while I considered it a tragedy to have to get out of bed so early every day... The salary? One lira a month, twenty cents of the dollar at that time, which I dutifully contributed to the support of the family, the lira buying five pounds of rice or bread, for which I only sacrificed two hours of sleep every morning, sixty hours of work a month, plus a dozen hours extra of work on Sunday, a third of a penny an hour. But the blessings of the priest were free.

However, although I was small and at five or six years of age my mind still knew nothing of... class struggle, don't imagine even for an instant that I was a total idiot. I had the feeling that for the two hours of sleep daily I was sacrificing to the Adoration of God Almighty, for one lira a month, that I was underpaid, even if the word exploitation had not yet dawned in my young mind. And so, soon after I became engaged in the service of the Divinity and the priest, I began to think of how I could increase my benefit. Not being short of imagination, the first extra benefit I started to enjoy was this: during the Mass one of my important and sacred functions was to pour the blood, I was told, of Christ on the fingers of the priest, while he continued to mumble Latin, then he drank it. Now the ampoule with Christ's blood was behind the altar out of sight of both the priest and the congregation, and I had to go there, pick up the ampulla, come in front of everybody, pour the... blood on the fingers of the priest, and while he was drinking it I would return the ampoule behind the altar. Now in seeing the priest drink with so much gusto the... blood, I got the curiosity to taste it myself. It was delicious! Real sweet! And from that moment when I was pouring it on the priest's fingers I would try to hold back some of it at the bottom of the ampulla to drink myself behind the altar. But

when the priest would see that was holding back too much, he would whisper, while turning his back to the congregation:

“Pour! Pour!”

But that was only sweet wine, and I began to think that I was entitled to something more substantial. Money! To add to the lira a month. Now the liras and the pennies were not laying around for a boy to pick them up. Priests know too well the value of money. Churches, supposedly, live on faith, but faith without dollars doesn't feed them. The contributions of the faithful do. And the church generously offers to them as compensation the blessings of Almighty God, his son Jesus, the son's mother, Mary, and a collection of thousands of Saints capable of miracles of all kinds to assure the happiness of all contributors... in proportion to their contributions. The Church says to them: “My dear children! Choose! Our divinities and saints are all at your service!... But never forget the collections box...”

Naturally also our village had the day of some saint or other, and the priest would pull out his relic, and on Sunday he would walk in front of me offering it to each kneeling devotee to kiss, I walking behind him collecting in a large plate the nickels and dimes of the aspirants to paradise, each devotee expecting to receive from the saint his or her particular miracle. At the end of the comedy the plate I was carrying was loaded with nickels and dimes, and the priest would leave the altar, I following carrying the treasure which to my eyes had a tremendous fascination. As soon as we were in the sacristy and no more under the eyes of the devotees, he would turn around, grab the plate from my hands, put a large handkerchief on the table, pour all the treasure in it, tie it up and put it into his large pocket. For me who had worked as much as him, not even a penny. After a while I began to think that I was the victim of an injustice. Therefore as I considered that my rights as a workingman were being violated, the next time that the kissing of the saint came around I decided that I would rely on my brain for justice. And so I did... in the amount of a nickel. While I was following the priest and he was busy putting the host in

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the mouth of the penitents, I little by little, with care pushed a nickel into the sleeve of my cassock. When the priest grabbed the plate from my hands I put the nickel in my pocket and justice was done.

Now this same priest in the garden had a huge fig tree loaded with juicy ripe figs. The priest was too fat and afraid to climb it himself, and perhaps too stingy to hire a man to go up and collect the figs for him. But he had me who could climb any tree as fearless as a monkey to collect dry branches to cook our soup, as most of the time our parents didn't have the money to buy the wood. So he asked me.

“Angioletto! Do you want to go up the tree to fetch the figs for me? God will give you his blessing!” I who for many days had eyed the figs with an irresistible desire to climb the tree when he was not around and steal them promptly answered:

“Reverend!... When do you want me to climb the tree? Now?...”

“Now. Here, tie this basket around your neck, and I will help you go up.”

He pushed me up until I could grab the first branch, then I was on my own. The tree was thirty or more feet high with many branches loaded with figs. Until I was on the first branches he could see me, but when I went higher he couldn't see me anymore, the foliage covering me completely. There my little brain promptly told me that this was the chance to add something to my wages of one lira a month. I began to put one fig in the basket, and two in my mouth, devouring them as fast as I could, because that paradise was not going to last forever. The reverend underneath was nervous. I could see him looking up trying to discover where I was, and what I was doing. Finally he couldn't stand it anymore.

“Angioletto!” came up his pitiful voice, “where are you?”

“I'm here... On top of the tree.”

“What are you doing... that I don't see you anymore?”

“I'm filling up the basket... with figs.”

“Angioletto! Sing! Sing! You have the voice of an angel!” But

I had my mouth full, and besides I had to be careful not to fall down. As soon as I could open my mouth I shouted:

"I have lost my voice... reverend." The fact is that my belly was full, and there was no more room for more figs. "I'm coming down... I'm getting dizzy!"

When I reached the ground and he saw that the basket was only half full, he couldn't refrain from commenting.

"And in all the time that you were up there out of my sight, these are all the figs that you could find?"

Ah! what a cruelty to corrupt the innocence of a little angel of six.

Industry in the village? A spinning mill which employed a couple of dozen girls not occupied in working the land, the motor force of the factory supplied by two vigorous men who alternated in turning the wheel that put the looms in motion, the electricity not yet having arrived in the village.

Pozzuolo Martesana, a really peaceful village, three kilometers (two miles, about) from the railroad station at Melzo, to which we had to talk to take the train to Milan, the nearest city. Pozzuolo Martesana, a really peaceful place without a single criminal, and not... honored by even a policeman, the so-called protection of the law being practically non-existent... that, being perhaps, one of the reasons of lack of crime?... The only appearance of the law took place once every few months in the person of two carabinieri—a kind of police force—who would come, take a walk along the five-hundred-yard-long street, disturbing rather than tranquilizing the people, and then disappear again for another few months.

Sensational happenings in the village when I was a child? I remember two. One of the two peasants who owned enough land to employ a few workers had four horses (my grandfather and grandmother on my father's side could afford only a donkey). One good morning the horses had disappeared. During the night, while every-

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body was asleep the thieves entered the stable and stole the horses. Nobody heard anything. The mystery was: How could the thieves take away the horses when dozens of people living near the stable did not hear the noise that the irons on the feet of the horses made on the stones of the road? They discovered afterward that the thieves had tied rags on the feet of the horses which they discarded once outside the village. The horses were never found.

The second sensational happening which shook the village didn't happen there, but in the city of Monza, about fifteen miles away in the year 1900. A certain Gaetano Bresci, the anarchist, killed the King of Italy. Why? Because the King had given a medal of honor to a general who, two years earlier, had given an order to his troops to shoot at a crowd of working people demonstrating in the street of Milan against the high cost of living, killing a number of them. Naturally the servile press painted the anarchist as a monster for killing the "good" King. And the ignorant people of the village, who could hardly read and couldn't even afford to buy the one-nickel newspaper, agreed with what the press and the government were saying.

But to me, a six year old boy, that single worker alone in the middle of an enormous crowd of idiots acclaiming royalty, that man who had the courage to kill a King who was protected by so many policemen, soldiers, and carabinieri, well, that Gaetano Bresci, who had even come from America, that fantastic country beyond the ocean, seemed, in my child's imagination not a monster, but a great hero! Yes, a hero even greater than those famous brigands of Calabria, at the time highly admired and acclaimed in popular stories and songs for the heroic adventures in escaping from the pursuit of the hated police forces of the government, the government never being loved by the people in Italy, because it is the oppressor of the people. Which in my case raises the question: are we born rebels or... sheep?

My childhood, in a way, ended at the age of nine, when I began to earn my living, away from the family, as a baker's helper in Milan. My work day in the shop began at 5:30 in the morning (while the owner slept another hour), carrying big loads of bread on my shoulders in a large basket to customers' homes, trudging up and down the stairs for many hours each day for a salary equivalent to three or four dollars a month, which was just enough to buy the shoes I was wearing out with so much walking. And this for five long years until I was fourteen years old, when I emancipated myself by starting to work only ten hours a day, sixty hours a week in a factory as an apprentice lather hand, for the equivalent of three cents an hour. As you can see this was still not an easy life. But then, in those days, the other proletarian youth didn't have it any better; therefore I was not a special martyr to exploitation.

Still, in spite of being occupied as a baker's helper so many hours every day, when they closed the bakery at nine o'clock and they sent me to bed in the attic (my only company being the mice, who anxiously waited for me to bring them their share of crumbs of bread), I managed to read many books by my beloved Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas, Leo Tolstoy, and other great writers whom I had discovered soon after I left the village where I had never seen anybody read books. (The peasants and workers didn't have any money to buy them, and the rich simply were not in the habit of reading books.) Years later, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, and already an atheist since fourteen when I became an anarchist, I discovered that the humblest of the three priests had a wonderful library. Having recognized my passion for reading he would secretly lend me the Greek classics whenever I was unemployed and had to return to the village until I had found another job. One of these occasions was when we went on strike in order to reduce our working hours on Saturday from ten to eight hours, without any increase of pay to compen-

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sate us for the reduced hours of work. We won that strike after two months, which shows how hard it was to wrench even the slightest concession from the capitalists of that time.

But for me, now that I was only working fifty-eight hours a week, it was a reduction of forty-two hours weekly from the one hundred hours weekly I had worked as a baker's helper. Now I could enjoy free evenings for meeting with my comrades, for going to the opera at La Scala (when I had one lira for a seat or standing up in the "Paradiso"), and soon for love under the stars, on the soft grass in the fields. This was the entertainment we could always afford, since the city was still small and a short walk brought us to the solitude of the fields, if the girl was willing and her mother was not too tyrannical about when we had to be back home.

At that time, discipline at work was practically non-existent, at least in the section I labored in. We enjoyed a lot of freedom, our foreman showing up briefly only in the morning to give us the work for the day, then disappearing for the rest of the day, leaving us to work at our own pace since we were all working at *cottimo* (piece-work), and therefore it was up to us to speed up or to slow down when we had earned the extra pay allowed over our regular pay. For me, accustomed to being constantly under the watchful eyes of the owners in the bakery where I had previously worked, this was an ideal situation, which I took full advantage of each day by hiding out for one or two hours in a special place to read my dear books, thanks to the fact that I had always been a fast worker, so it wasn't difficult for me to finish my daily quota earlier.

In my job I was also lucky. Working near me there was an old anarchist, who seeing me always reading some book, soon adopted me as a kind of spiritual son, providing me with anarchist papers and pamphlets, which pleased me so much that I devoured them one after the other and asked for more. Although I had already read numerous books of the best known literary writers, in the environment in which I was living as a baker's helper, books dealing with social

philosophy had never come into my hands. For me it was a great discovery! It took only a few months to convince me that anarchism was the philosophy that most fully satisfied my rebel spirit. From that moment, individual liberty became the dream inspiring all my social battles, and war against all tyrants and tyrannies became the ideal of my whole life.

The period from 1908 to 1914 was one of great agitation in Italy. And naturally Milan, at that time being the most industrialized city in the country, became the center of great strikes for improving the miserable conditions of the workers. These were also the years of a great deal of anarchist agitation in various parts of Italy whose description would fill a volume by itself. Here, however, I will limit myself to summing up only briefly the agitation for and against the First World War. The great majority of anarchists all over Italy took part in these battles to keep Italy at peace with great courage and enormous sacrifices, since practically all the anarchists in Italy were against participating in the human carnage that would result from the war.

I first entered the anarchist movement as a fighter for freedom at the age of fourteen. We are very serious "warriors" at that age. My first act of "war" against the enemy of freedom began in the Central Garden one summer night during which the municipal band gave an open-air concert for the public. I went there alone to sell an anarchist weekly, all flame and thunder against the capitalist enemies and against the oppressive government. At that time the anarchist movement in Milan published one weekly paper and a monthly magazine, although the population was less than one million. And there I was in the garden, the little warrior (it makes me laugh now), in the middle of that huge standing crowd, between the pauses of one musical selection and another, shouting the title of my precious weekly at five centimos a copy (one penny), as I pressed my way through the audience. But that "battle" of mine against the capitalist enemies of freedom and social justice didn't last long. Two giant carabinieri in uniform grabbed hold of me,

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raising me over their heads in order to be able to take me out of the crowd, as I furiously fought to free myself from the two laughing brutes. They took me to the police station, and next day to jail. There they put me in a large room together with some of the most hardened criminals, who, seeing me so young, treated me like so many tender mothers, perhaps for fear that at night I might start crying and spoil their peaceful sleep. But I, cry? A warrior? I was defeated in my first battle, but I was full of pride! Now I had my baptism of fire as an authentic revolutionary who was suffering for his ideal! It was a glory for me!

A week later they took me in front of a judge. Tried as a “dangerous” anarchist! Another medal of glory! And that criminal of a judge didn’t have any consideration for me, who, after all, was just a boy. Not being able to condemn me for selling an anarchist paper, since it was legal, he sentenced me to eight days in jail for carrying a weapon that threatened the public order: a penknife that I used as a pencil sharpener. In that way I came out of jail classified as a “dangerous criminal” to be watched.

Luckily I hadn’t told the police where I was working. So a letter from the good doctor stating that I had been sick enabled me to go back to my job. But the police soon discovered where I was working. So for a couple of months a policeman would wait for me to come out of my house in the morning, follow me until I entered the factory (luckily on the same street), and in the evening follow me from the factory to my home. They finally got tired of this, seeing that I was not preparing a revolution at age fourteen. Naturally, other anarchists were receiving the same treatment.

It was the price that we had to pay for being rebels. And soon we were on the employer’s blacklist which made it difficult for us to hold jobs for long, or find new ones when discharged. After a few years of this kind of struggle, with mostly temporary jobs, I was forced to abandon working as a turner in order not to die of starvation. So one morning I bought two large baskets, went to the wholesale market, loaded them with fruit that was in season, and started

selling it in the streets. I earned more or less the same as I had in the factory and I didn't give a damn anymore about bosses. I did this for two years, with the advantage that when I didn't sell all the fruit I bought, I ate it myself, pounds and pounds of fruit for my regular meals, to the great benefit of my health. A habit which I have kept up for most of my life... when I could afford it.

During the years I was working in factories a number of strikes took place, generally lasting one or two months. Strikes of thousands of workers, which, every time they had open air meetings generally ended with violent demonstrations in the streets, as the strikers attempted to carry their anger to the center of the city, which meant Piazza del Duomo where the bourgeoisie and upper class, the enemies of the working class, assembled. The police and the army would try to stop our march and break up our demonstration, using truncheons and sometimes bullets. Then the cavalry would charge us with their horses, trying to hit us with their sabers, while we were digging the stones out of the street to throw at them, the stones being our best... artillery, as we were too poor to be able to match their weapons: buy more substantial arms like they had. The anarchists were naturally always in the forefront in these battles.

Besides strikes for economic reasons, great demonstrations took place when, in Barcelona, Spain, the authorities first arrested and then shot Francisco Ferrer, a well-known personality among the anarchists in Italy also.

In another demonstration in which the battle between us and the police and army lasted over an hour, we did succeed in reaching the square in front of La Scala, with the aim of penetrating the gallery, a famous arcade where the bourgeoisie usually met in luxurious cafés. But we didn't succeed as we were outnumbered by a concentration of the police and cavalry, the latter attacking with fury. Here the police succeeded in getting their hands on me. But while they were dragging me toward the police headquarters nearby, I suc-

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ceeded in freeing myself and escaping, the police keeping half of my coat in their hands and I getting rid of the other half before they succeeded in arresting me again, throwing me a second time into prison. At the trial a week later, the police could not prove that I had fought against them, so they had to set me free.

At another time, an enormous meeting was held in the vicinity of Porta Vittoria, not far from the largest factory in Milan at that time, La Miami. Another strike—a general strike in the mechanical industry—was going on for two months, and the industrialists did not want to bend, although our demands were very moderate. At the meeting Errico Malatesta spoke, along with a certain Corridone, the secretary of the Syndicalist Union, as well as other speakers. The crowd consisted of thirty to forty thousand strikers and sympathizers. The meeting ended peacefully, but the police and the cavalry were waiting for us nearby in one of the main boulevards through which they knew we'd have to pass on our way home. They were determined to attack and disperse us in order to stop us from starting a violent demonstration, which on that occasion, due to the many women and young non-strikers among us, we had no intention of doing. But naturally, when the police and the cavalry attacked us we responded, and the resulting battle was on, very violently as the non-combatants took refuge in houses. Finally police and cavalry retired at some distance blocking the boulevard to stop, question, and arrest some of those whom they suspected of having participated in the melée. And I, after a hurried cleaning inside the door of a house, was saved from another arrest by the beautiful Adele. She grabbed my arm and then told the police when we had to pass through that we were there by pure chance, having gone to the country to hear the birds singing in the woods; my bruises being caused by those villainous strikers. The policemen let us pass with a smile, some of them still acting like gentlemen towards beautiful girls.

One more battle took place another day in Porta Venezia. I don't remember the reason for that demonstration, but I can still see the enormous crowd of many thousand coming down from Porta Loreto, the famous Piazza Loreto where later the dead Mussolini was hanged by his legs. Our intention, as always, was to reach Piazza del Duomo to scare the hell out of the assembled bourgeoisie. But the police and the cavalry, as usual, barred our march. As the masses pressed against us, we anarchists and the other revolutionary youth drew up a kind of front facing the police and the cavalry like two armies ready to engage in combat, separated from each other by twenty-five or thirty steps. At my side were Ghezzi, Ustori, and many other comrades, individualists and anarcho-communists working together like brothers; and on the other side those we used, jokingly, to call the *giovinelli* (the youngsters), Fedeli and Filippi among them, because they were three or four years younger than we were, Filippi especially dear to me because a very short time before I had brought him into the movement myself. He was a very intelligent youngster, but due to his very great enthusiasm, not very cautious. Convinced that the revolution was near, with the few liras that he was earning as a pharmacist's assistant, he succeeded in buying a revolver, about which he used to boast very much. This lack of caution later led to his tragic death.

During the battle that soon started that day between us and the forces of "order"—disorder to us—the police started to shoot, probably at the beginning to frighten us, and we responded by throwing stones at them to see if we could push them back and open a passage for us to proceed. But soon one of their bullets killed a comrade near us. Realizing that he was dead, I, Ghezzi, Fedeli, and Filippi wanted to carry him away, but we didn't succeed because the cavalry charged us, so we had to leave the body of our comrade in the hands of the police.

The next day, Filippi, perhaps thinking that he was in danger, went to work at the pharmacy with his precious revolver. The pharmacist realized that he was armed, and secretly denounced him

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to the police, who arrested him and put him in jail. He was just the scapegoat that the police were looking for to cover their own murder of our comrade. They accused him of being the killer, although we knew positively that at the demonstration Filippi was unarmed like us, and like us was throwing stones, and that the dead comrade was killed at our side. So the day before the trial I and another comrade decided to do something dramatic to try to save him. The only witness against Filippi was the pharmacist, so we had to make him afraid to present himself at the trial to accuse our comrade. Therefore we invited a dozen comrades to meet us secretly near Porta Venezia on the Bastion still existing on the evening before the trial, each bringing a good stick, for dangerous action, without telling them its nature for fear that they would spread the news and so find a hundred comrades on our hands. In what we intended to do there was no room for that many. Of the comrades invited not one failed to come, each with the best stick he could get hold of in such short time. We explained to them our plan: to go to the pharmacy and in a minute demolish it with our sticks without saying a word, but without hurting the pharmacist in order not to worsen, rather than improve, Filippi's situation. And we told them that those who didn't feel like taking part in the action, that was the moment to say so, that we two would even go alone, although if we all went together the action would be quicker. All were enthusiastic and since it was already dark we departed on foot, and separately, to meet near the pharmacy, which was in a small square near the park, our meeting place.

But it was summer, and the little square in front of the pharmacy was full of people sitting on benches enjoying the fresh air. A complication. So in order that the people seeing us would laugh rather than get alarmed, we decided to form a line, two by two, and with the sticks raised in the air, cross the square in total silence, so that people should think: "But who are these lunatics?" and stay put. And in that way we crossed the square peacefully without anybody saying a word to us or making a move, just eyeing us with curiosity.

When we reached the pharmacy one hundred feet away always in total silence, we left two comrades outside to act as lookouts, and the rest of us went inside starting to demolish showcases, vases and everything in sight with the sticks. The pharmacist, alone in the pharmacy (we made sure that no clients were inside) after the first moment of astonishment at our appearance and then at our action, escaped to the back room, pale with fright, but without a scratch, as we had decided. But the pharmacy was destroyed in an instant without a word having been spoken. Then again in line, silent, sticks raised, walking as if we were going for a stroll; and none of the people sitting there said a word or made a move, leaving us to wonder whether out of fear or admiration. And as soon as we were in the park out of their sight, we scattered in all directions, individually, as we had arrived.

The next day the pharmacist didn't show up in the court, and Filippi was acquitted. But like a man with a great will to attack the enemy in his den, Filippi died tragically a few years later, killed by a bomb. At that time I was already abroad, and the tragic news struck me profoundly. One of the most intelligent comrades destroyed in the flower of youth, alas! because of too much much enthusiasm, in an action of limited value, even had it succeeded.

To give an idea how sparse money was in our anarchist pockets, even in 1914 at the beginning of the First World War, due to the difficulty of finding work if blacklisted as anarchists, I'll mention one case. A comrade who feared being drafted in the army decided to desert, not wanting to give his skin for a war that he didn't want; the sirens of war in Italy having made no impression on us anarchists. And although this comrade need only about fifty liras—ten dollars at that time—to cross the border, neither he nor two other comrades who wanted to help him escape had such an enormous sum. Now, regarding the life of a comrade as most precious, they decided to help him to get the fifty liras by becoming... "bandits" for a night. So the wife of the comrade took three pieces of cardboard she had picked up in

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the street, cut out two holes in each one for the eyes, and attached two strings to each piece of cardboard, making masks. Then the three comrades went to the richest section of the city around midnight, put the cardboard masks on their faces, and stopped the first man they met who seemed rich, telling him, as in the adventure books:

“Your wallet or your life!”

But the three bandits didn’t realize that, due to the summer heat, many people were still at their windows, taking the fresh air. So while the man remained frozen, the people at the windows started to shout: “Bandits! Bandits! Police! Police!”

They had to escape without a penny. Later on, in front of a gambling house, they stopped a nice, fat bourgeois, repeating the same phrase: “Your wallet or your life!” And while two of the comrades were holding him steady, the other explored his wallet. Empty! He must have lost all his money gambling. The worst was that the pig got frightened and started shouting as if somebody was putting a knife at his throat, while the comrades were armed only with a toy gun, a real gun being only a dream to make a revolution. At his screams two cops jumped out of nowhere, starting shooting in the air. The three comrades had to disappear again without a penny.

In desperation they tried a third time in another rich district. It must have been already 2:30 in the morning, the proletarians certainly already being in bed, since most of them started to work at seven o’clock in the morning. They saw coming out of a public urinal two well-dressed people. The comrade pointed the toy gun at them. “We only want your money!” Only one had seven liras (\$1.40), the other a few pennies, which the comrades didn’t even want to take. Thus ended their career as “bandits”.

Wishing to escape military service, I sold everything I possessed, which consisted of the two baskets and the scale I used for selling fruit, to accumulate enough money to take the train to Genoa, the main Italian seaport, which is about two miles from Milan. All my

money spent on the railroad ticket to Genoa so that the only property I had left was a dictionary which I sold for five liras (one dollar) at a newsstand in order to eat. Then I immediately started walking around the port seeking a boat ready to depart. I saw one loaded with passengers with many suitcases. That's my boat, I said to myself. I only have to climb aboard without... being seen, and I'll be on my way for some foreign country beyond the ocean.

The gangplank was watched by two sailors on top, to whom I shouted, "Is it ready to leave?"

"In a few minutes," they shouted back. I didn't even ask them where they were going, as it was obvious that it was going across the ocean. While I was looking for a way to go aboard unseen by the guards, a man approached and asked me:

"Do you want to go aboard?"

"And who are you?" I answered, scrutinizing him.

"I want to hide aboard also, but I only see that rope for climbing up, and it is very long and I don't know if I can make it. I may fall into the sea and drown, as I don't know how to swim," he replied.

"Then I'll try, although I can't swim either. But I'm ready for anything."

Noticing that the guards watching the gangplank could not see me well, I grabbed the rope and up I went, using the system I had used as a child of five to nine years old to climb trees in search of dry wood to cook our *polenta*, a mixture of corn flour, because many times our parents were penniless and couldn't buy wood. I reached the top practically exhausted, and taking a look around and noticing that nobody had seen me climbing, I jumped aboard, and decided that the safest place for me to hide in order not to be discovered as a stowaway was to mix among the passengers as if I were one of them. So I sat with a family, who assumed I was one of the passengers who liked their company. After a few minutes I saw that the other would-be stowaway had also climbed aboard. I stealthily motioned to him to do what I was doing. But he didn't understand and continued to

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walk around. An officer grew suspicious of him and asked to see his documents... which of course he didn't have. Naturally he grabbed him, then shrewdly asked him: "And where is the other guy?"

"There he is!" answered the imbecile, pointing at me. So I was arrested also, and they delivered us both to the police on the quay, from where we saw the steamboat depart. Then, furious, I shouted to the other: "And you, isdiot, had to tell them that I was also aboard!"

"But I thought they knew!" answered the donkey. They took us to jail, and I didn't see him again, nor did I learn his name. They freed me after eight days, putting me in the hands of a carabiniere in civilian clothes, who had to deliver me to the hands of the mayor of the village, as if I were a precious package not to be lost. But when we were at the railroad station, the carabiniere (doing police work) told me:

"If you promise me to go to visit your mayor, I'll let you go alone. You know, I have a lover, and the time I would waste in taking you to your mayor, I would prefer to... waste it with her. It would amuse me more," he added with a smile. Graciously, I said goodby to him. What did I have to do? Force him to keep me company, after the many battles we anarchists had with them and the police in the street in demonstrations? It would have broken my heart!

"Then goodby!" I shouted at him, also smiling for the first time at a policeman, getting rapidly away for fear that he might change his mind. "I also have a lover, and I'm sure that she will prefer that I'll meet her without your... protection."

"Then goodby!" he shouted back, already from a distance, laughing, and disappearing.

"Goodby for ever!" but it was a wasted goodby, as he couldn't hear me anymore... I doubt that such reciprocal gentlemen can still be found in our society.

In 1916, before the entry of Italy into the First World War, Milan was perhaps the most important center of agitation against the

war. It was only because of the government and the interventionist elements (led by the traitor Mussolini, who had been thrown out of the Socialist Party as the editor of their daily newspaper *Avanti!* because he was in favor of the war, and then, with secret funds of the French government had founded his daily *Il Popolo d'Italia* to preach for war) neutralizing the revolutionary elements led above all by the anarchists, that Italy could enter the war without the danger of a revolutionary explosion. Yes, it is true, other cities were violently against the entry of Italy into the war, but Milan was the industrial center at that time, and also the center of pro-war propaganda.

It was said that where Milan went, Italy would go, whether the rest of Italy wanted to do so or not. But Milan didn't surrender to the war folly, and still less the anarchist elements, particularly the youth who were the shock force which drew with them all the other anti-interventionist forces into the anti-war battle. And it was mostly against the anti-war forces that Mussolini's fury was directed, because we didn't let them win with our continuous battles against them in the streets. You could say that we, the anarchist youth, in the last few weeks before the entry of Italy into the war, used to pass very few hours in our beds. Each night we were busy with some action against the interventionist forces.

Mussolini wanted to have his revenge against the *Avanti!* by destroying it for throwing him out, and persisting in opposing the war. And when a couple of times he sent a crowd of his mercenaries to assault the *Avanti!* a number of anarchists were there also to help the socialists defend it, and real battles were fought. Mussolini's henchmen never succeeded, and they always got a good beating from us.

One night a dozen of us anarchist youth wanted to give a solemn lesson to the coward Mussolini. But as it was impossible to get near him, because he had himself protected too well by his *squadristi* everywhere he went, we decided to hit him right in his den: inside the house of his *Popolo d'Italia*, as I said, specially created to foment war in Italy. And we decided to assault him by surprise. But the editor's office

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where Mussolini was preparing the paper was in a small, long street, and it was impossible to go near him without being seen, particularly as it was defended by his praetorian guard. Therefore, in order to succeed in carrying out our project we used a stratagem. One evening a group of a dozen of us, arm in arm, entered the small street, not very well lighted, singing with all our voices the interventionist hymn, with refrains of: "Viva Mussolini! Viva Mussolini!" His assassins, thinking that we were their partisans, and that we were coming to serenade their idol, let us pass by opening the great entrance door to their court where the *Popolo d'Italia* was.

Once in their fortress we continued to shout: "Viva Mussolini! We want Mussolini! Let Mussolini speak!"

We were hoping that he would come out among us so that we could put our hands on him. If he had, probably the history of Mussolini would have ended right there at that moment, because it was a question of saving the Italian people, and ourselves with them, from the massacre of war.

But the skunk who we knew already as the most cowardly man you could meet face to face, didn't dare to come down among us. Instead, surrounded by his praetorian, he only trusted himself to come out on the balcony of the first floor, too high to be reached, with all the doors that led to him, closed. Therefore it was impossible to grab him, and we were in the den of wolves. So we were forced to end the comedy. As soon as he opened his mouth to punish us with one of his speeches, we threw at him everything hidden we were carrying. But the coward, at the first projectile that hit him, and the first shout of "Down with war! Down with Mussolini!" threw himself to the floor of the balcony, and we were forced to engage in battle with his praetorian, who, recovering from the surprise, threw themselves on us ferociously for daring to attack their God. We had sworn that none of us would fall into their hands alive; and all together, all bruised, it is true, we succeeded in retreating, and then disappearing, as we had planned, before the police would arrive. We had failed, but with the

satisfaction that if we had succeeded the history of Italy would have perhaps followed a different course, and a million victims would probably have been spared the holocaust. Such are sometimes the surprises of history. A small fact loaded with consequences.

In these notes I don't intend to give a detailed chronology of each event of those four years. I only want to paint with some strokes chosen episodes in order to bring them back to life as personal participation, which in my view is the only valid means to recreate the authenticity of the experienced moment.

I said that I knew well the cowardice of the comedian Mussolini, from the time that he was still the director of *Avanti!*, the socialist daily, and loved to pass himself off as the most revolutionary of revolutionaries. In spite of his continuous incitations in his truculent speeches for action in the street, we anarchists, at moments of collisions with the police in the demonstrations he had incited, never saw Mussolini. So it was always we who came out of those demonstrations with broken heads. But one day we anarchists decided to play a trick on him in order to have a good laugh at his expenses.

Grave agitations were happening in that moment, with many confrontations with the police forces in the street, and one day a public meeting took place at the socialists' *Camera del Lavoro*. A huge place.

The great hall couldn't hold all the demonstrators, who were spread out even in the street. We must have been more than ten thousand people. There were a number of speakers, Mussolini being the last and generally the most violent. We knew that it was his habit, in order to pose as a great revolutionary, to incite the crowd to go out in the streets and attack the police in order to clear the way for the demonstrators to reach the Piazza del Duomo, which is at the center of the city, while once in the street, he would vanish, and leave us alone to get our head broken by the police sticks. But this time we were determined to make his game fail, by forcing him to be with us at the head of the demonstration so as to let him also taste the sticks

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of the police and the sabers of the cavalry on his own body. In order to succeed in this ruse a dozen of us anarchists placed ourselves near the stand, and as we had foreseen, Mussolini ended his speech shouting like a madman (it was also a comedy on his part): "Everybody into Duomo Square! Into the den of the bourgeoisie!" Which meant encounters with the sticks of the policemen and the sabers of the cavalry that were waiting for us at strategic points along the way.

So we answered him with our comedy:

"Yes, yes, everybody into Piazza del Duomo! Down with the bourgeoisie! Hurray for Mussolini! Mussolini in front leading the masses! Hurray for the Revolution!"

And before he could vanish, we grabbed him by the legs, pulling down from the platform. And surrounding him, we pulled him to the street, while he, trapped among us, was forced to continue shouting in our company: "To Duomo Square! To Duomo Square!" And this time we were not going to let him escape. We wanted to have some fun ourselves!

The street in which the *Camera del Lavoro* was located was rather narrow. Pointing in the direction of the Duomo, it led first to a little square near the Navilio Canal, which at that time was still uncovered, and in order to advance toward the Piazza del Duomo (a good mile away) we had to cross a narrow bridge. And there, after breaking through a couple of police blocks, each one composed of several lines of policemen, in the little square in front of the little bridge the cavalry was waiting to charge us in the event the police had not succeeded with their sticks in stopping the crowd composed of thousands pushing behind us like an avalanche. We anarchists having had many such encounters knew that due to the narrowness of the street and the little square, only the first two or three hundred would be able to intervene in the fighting, the other thousands serving only as pressure. And Mussolini, in front surrounded by us, would be forced to fight if he wanted to save his skin... or escape. And this is what he succeeded in doing in the heat of the mêlée, when we

were charged by the cavalry, and we were broken up, each of us being forced to fight for himself or herself. And when there was a short pause, while the cavalry was regrouping, and we were busy digging up more stones to throw at the police and cavalry, our only free weapons, we looked around and Mussolini had vanished. It was later, after we had succeeded in forcing the police and the cavalry to retreat at some distance that we discovered him hiding under the stairs of a house shaking with fear. What could we do with a coward like that? We just laughed! And left him there, while with the crowd we continued the fight, as we didn't succeed in digging him out. That's how cowardly he was.

Let's remember that the anarchist movement in Milan at that time was very strong, as there were times with both a weekly and a monthly magazine succeeding in coming out simultaneously in Milan alone, which had a population of only 800,000 people. And the word *anarchy* meant action among the revolutionary masses. With elements of the *Unione Sindacale* (Syndicalist Union), the socialist youth, and the anarchists, we really thought ourselves the vanguard of the revolution, which we were convinced would take place in the near future. When the anarchists called for action in the streets, the masses knew we would be there with them, always at the head of the crowd in action, not at the tail, as was the habit of most of the so-called leaders of other movements.

One of these mass actions that so overjoys the hearts of revolutionaries and enlivens their spirits from the many disillusionments which they have suffered, took place just before the declaration of war by Italy. The government, it was rumored, had already decided to participate in the war on the side of France and England, and was only waiting for the favorable moment to declare it. But fearing that if it rushed things it could find itself face to face with a popular rebellion, it decided to first conquer Milan at all costs, by breaking our resistance. To tell the truth, we were exhausted by our unceasing agitations and

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demonstrations, but although we knew that ours was a lost cause face to face with the forces of the government, and the combined forces of the interventionists, we didn't want to give up the fight without one last battle. And here I speak especially of the anarchists.

At the beginning of the war in 1914 Italy was allied with Germany and Austria. But she refused to enter in the war on their side, remaining temporarily neutral. However in 1915 Italian volunteers went to France to help her against Germany and Austria, while the majority of the Italian people were against war on any side. But the Italian government and interventionists wanted to enter on the side of France and England, against their former allies, Germany and Austria. And in order to force us into the war against our will they brought back the 6,000 volunteers from France, concentrating them all in Milan to beat us, and then declared that the Italian people wanted the war.

The 6,000 repatriated interventionists then were armed with special deadly sticks. Then they organized a meeting at Piazza del Duomo, naturally with the complicity of the government and the interventionists, in which Mussolini was the principal speaker, who had to talk on top of the few steps that lead to the entrance of the Cathedral.

The Socialist Party seemed to have renounced any further resistance, at least openly in the street, and we anarchists were furious because we felt desperately impotent in the face of such concentration of enemy forces. So a group of eight comrades—all unemployed—met the day before the meeting in the *Giardino Centrale* (Central Garden). We felt like crying, seeing that they wanted to lead us to the slaughterhouse, and we didn't have the strength left to stop them any more. How could we prepare a counter-demonstration, we who had no weapons, because we were too poor to buy even an old pistol? We pulled out our pockets and among us had a capital of... seven liras. One dollar forty cents. We decided to invest it all in organizing a counter-demonstration. A thing which seemed pure

lunacy, considering that the enemy was well-armed and calculated to concentrate fifteen or twenty thousand persons in the square. But it is from such follies that sometimes spring great mass actions. Our only hope was to take the enemy by surprise, when he felt sure to win without opposition.

We brought the seven liras to a friend who was a printer, asking him to print a leaflet with the simple appeal in large letters:

WORKERS!

TONIGHT EVERYONE IN DUOMO SQUARE!

AGAINST THE WAR!

THE ANARCHISTS!

The printer gave us almost ten thousand leaflets, mostly at his own expense, we imagined. That same night as the meeting our group divided at the four exits of the bigger factories in the city: the Pirelli, Bianchi, Miami, and Elvetica. Two of us took care of the Pirelli, which at that time was in via Galileo. The two comrades who had gone to the Miami were arrested, luckily after they were through distributing the leaflets. La Pirelli had two exits, another comrade taking one and I the other, three or four blocks apart from each other. Naturally we drew a lot of attention with such a manifesto, and the police came running and blocked the comrade, arresting him, but all his leaflets were already in the hands of the workers who disappeared with them. And I, at the other exit, as I saw the police coming, after the workers had called my attention, threw the few leaflets I still had in the air and vanished. The four other comrades completed their work at the other two factories, Bianchi and Elvetica, not far from Pirelli. Of the eight... conspirators, only five of us were still at large.

There were only a little over two hours before the meeting would start. But luckily at that time Milan was not that big, and Piazza del Duomo being in the center of the city, practically every worker, even on foot in half an hour could come to the meeting place. How would proletarian Milan, revolutionary Milan, answer our appeal?

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That was what we were asking ourselves anxiously, when toward the time of the meeting—in the company of other comrades we had the time to gather—we walked toward Piazza del Duomo.

When we arrived we were tremendously surprised to find the enormous square filled with people. But who were our friends and who were the enemies? The same perplexity existed in all of us. We were studying each other's faces trying to guess. Naturally we knew all the comrades, and making signs of recognition we signaled to each other to advance to the front as close to the speakers as possible, the podium being well protected by the interventionist volunteers returned from France, and now armed with truncheons, by the government, who were waiting for Mussolini, their idol, to appear.

And the antiwar masses who probably by now had reached the point of despair to still be able to stop the catastrophe, by discharging on the heads of those responsible of wanting to lead them to the butcher house of war? The appeal of the anarchists once more had offered them the opportunity, although they had already lost all hope. And our appeal, which told them that not all of us had surrendered, served like a kind of telephone from mouth to mouth, from osteria to osteria (the places of the poor workers at that time where mostly on Sundays they used to go to play cards, or bocce, and drink a glass of wine or two) passing along our screams:

TONIGHT!

EVERYBODY TO DUOMO SQUARE!

AGAINST THE WAR!

THE ANARCHISTS!

And to the square they had come, boiling with rage against their enemies. And now, even without weapons we formed a kind of army.

When Mussolini got ready to speak the silence was total: as soon as he opened his big mouth and said the first word the hurricane exploded!

“Down with war! Scoundrels! Mercenaries!” (It was

well known that Mussolini had received 100,000 francs from the French government, secretly, precisely to create his daily *Il Popolo d'Italia* in order to make propaganda in favor of Italy entering the war on the side of the allies.) “Give it to them! Hit! Down with Mussolini! Get hold of the traitor! The coward! Hang him!”

And we attacked his praetorians who tried to stop us from reaching Mussolini, who didn’t have the time to say a second word; and as was his habit, he vanished from our sight, and disappeared from the square.

But in a few seconds the shouts of “Down with war!” spread all over the square, and so did the “Hurray for war!” But the shouts against as well as the ones in favor of war served to reveal who were the adversaries. And in this way the battle spread all over the square in a hundred, in a thousand individual and group struggles, body to body. Each of us had his enemy, and the hour had arrived to find out who was with us and who against us.

On our side were the calloused hands, on the other side the bourgeois and some confused devil of a worker who had let himself be tricked by their leaders into thinking that the war was for the defense of... democracy, liberty, the fatherland, all of a sudden having discovered that civilization was all on our side, and barbarism all on the side of the former allies, now our enemies. And in order to save this civilization we had to butcher people by the millions, by destroying a part of the globe with iron and fire, and transforming in four years beautiful fields into caves for troglodytes, and immense cemeteries.

And in this way, once the struggle started all over the square it continued for hours, full of anger on our part since our lives would be endangered against our will. And not having succeeded in getting hold of Mussolini, because the coward had vanished—a general leaving his troops to get their heads broken—we turned our hatred against his mercenaries who had come to protect him.

The battle was more ferocious near the stairs in front of the cathedral where the speakers were supposed to be, and where most of

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the armed interventionists were concentrated to defend the speakers from our fury, who were no longer there. And there it was where the greatest number of wounded happened, myself with two teeth half broken by a stick blow, making all my mouth bleed, and in my rage at the moment not even realizing that I was wounded, continuing to distribute also my blows right and left, to anyone who shouted: "Hurray for war!"

And after we in front succeeded in defeating our enemies and putting them to flight, and getting hold of some of their sticks—the interventionists could not use their guns for fear of hitting their own comrades—we rushed to help the other groups we saw in danger. And it was already toward one o'clock after midnight when we finally chased all our enemies from the square, pursuing them toward the Castello Forzesco a mile away.

We had won the battle, but sadly we knew just the same that the entry of Italy into the war was decided. And in fact the government declared it not long after. To us anarchists remained the satisfaction to having organized the last open battle against the folly of war in Milan. Nobody else—that I know of—had called for a counter-demonstration against Mussolini and his gang of interventionists for that evening.

At the beginning of the war, some of us who were unemployed, in order to earn our living, started to sell the afternoon papers, shouting the news in the street. In order to avenge ourselves against the hated war, in a very short time we had destroyed—in words—the whole Italian army, and sank the whole navy... with shouts. If the army had lost one yard, in screams it seemed all in retreat; if a small boat was sunk, it seemed that the whole fleet had gone to the bottom. And the people who had hated the war laughed when we were accused of demoralizing the nation. As if the nation needed to be demoralized by us. It was already demoralized before the war started; and it was curious that the news of Italian disasters served to sell the paper. Such was

the antiwar spirit of the Italian people.

And when to change the music a little, we announced some small victory by our army, nobody believed in the honesty of the politicians. And the generals earned no trust among the people. Everybody knew about all the defeats the army suffered in Abyssinia. The Italian army was an army without glory, covered with contempt. And the people that were forced to wear the military uniform were considered the victims of the incompetence of its generals, who were considered unable to win victories, in spite of the natural heroism of the Italian people.

Enrollment in the army was extended to ever more strata of the population, and I knew that my turn was coming, and that if I didn't want to serve as cannon fodder I had to find work that would temporarily keep me from going to the front immediately, in order to give me time to find a way and the means to leave the country. And as I had worked some time as a lather, that is the job I found immediately. You don't fight wars without machines. The place I found only produced searchlights. Those too served for war, but they weren't bullets, and saved me from carrying a gun.

And jokingly it was said that if the searchlights could serve the Italian army to advance, they could serve them better still to run away.

In the factory we were only about one hundred workers. As I was the first anarchist in the shop, little by little I succeeded in bringing a dozen comrades to work there, among them Ugo Fedeli, Francesco Ghezzi, and others. And the fact that with the entry of Italy in the war we managed to work as machinists was to delay as much as possible military service, as none of us had any intention of going to slaughter anybody on the battlefields. That was why we fought against the war before it was declared.

As I expected, soon I was called to the army. I was the first of the comrades working in our place. To gain time to make my plans

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to escape I presented myself one Sunday morning at eight o'clock. At nine I was in uniform; three hours later, at twelve, my military glory ended. After being kept for three hours running in front of a corporal to learn to make the salute, I jumped out of the window of the place where we were. The army never saw me again, and I never collected a penny of my pay of ten cents of the lira a day as a hero of the fatherland. So let it be clear that my fatherland got from me three hours of my life free of charge. And what did I get from my fatherland in return? A sentence of seventeen years in jail, if they would have put their hands on me, first for desertion from a war that I fought tooth and nail trying to save Italy from its hell; and second, after the "crime" of desertion was amnestied after the war for fear of the tens of thousands of deserters who were roaming all over Italy threatening to make a revolution. I suppose because I was an anarchist, they hated to let me free, so they kept the sentence of seventeen years hanging over my head, no longer for desertion, but for running away and stealing the military uniform which they had forced me to wear for three hours... while I had left them as a gift my own clothes. Obviously they wanted me to jump out of the window... naked, and so escape dressed only in my skin. That's how ridiculous the law is.

To complete the picture, my presence in the army must have been so essential, that for two months they didn't even discover that I was missing—the other soldiers, on my request, having made my clothes disappear. I was supposed to sleep in the barracks and in the morning go to work to the factory in uniform, and after work to return to the barracks. Instead the barracks never saw me again, as after work I would go where I had rented a room, dress in civilian clothes, and forget about the army until next morning, when I would return to the factory dressed as a soldier; all the hundred workers knowing that I was already a deserter, and not one of them betraying me to the two officers of the army who were there all day long to supervise the work we were doing for the army. That is how the workers hated the war into which they had been forced in Italy.

Naturally my safety could not last for long, although it had never occurred to the officers to ask me to which regiment I belonged, nor to check up on my identity. That is how well the Italian army was organized.

The factory was at the end of an alley. It was a great hall which could be surveyed by the directors from an elevated bureau, where the two officers were. The discipline was not severe, particularly with a dozen anarchists working there. No one paid any attention to the discipline. And since everybody knew his work, discipline was not necessary. And nobody could squeeze out of us more work than what we wanted to produce. And since we were all efficient workers we always, during the day, could spare some free time. Therefore the toilet served us more as a dormitory to catch up for lost sleep, than for the purpose for which it had been built. Particularly for me, an enthusiast for opera, which in Italy at that time ended around one o'clock in the morning, and work started at seven o'clock for ten hours of work.

One day the director, with the intention of reinforcing discipline, surprised one worker sleeping in the toilet. We immediately raised such noise against the director for having violated the privacy of that sacred place, that none of the directors ever dared to put foot inside there anymore.

We anarchists used the factory besides as a place for discussions. Many were the pauses we used during the day to circulate from one machine to the other to discuss our problems, to the great annoyance of the director who saw us.

One day we got the idea of asking for an increase in our pay or we would strike, just to agitate a little and have an excuse for retarding the work somewhat. As I was one of those who had been in the factory longer, the factory having been created exclusively to produce those searchlights, the workers insisted that I should also be the one to present our demands.

But I was the only soldier in the place.

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“I accept,” I said, “but as a soldier the officers will arrest me. How can we prevent that?”

“If they put a hand on you, we stop the machines, and declare the strike.”

We agreed that if things got dangerous with the officers, from the bureau we would give them a signal. So I and another worker went up. As soon as we presented ourselves in front of the director and the officers, and told them that we all wanted an increase in pay, since we worked so... hard, the officers became furious against me, and started to shout:

“How dare you, a soldier, come here as a delegate of the workers, and threaten us with a strike?... Attention! Take off your cap in front of your officers! Make the salute!”

“I don’t know how to make it!” I answered with a smile.

“You can’t... make a salute?... What kind of a soldier are you?” continued one, almost with a stroke, finding that unbelievable.

“Of the Italian army.”

“Silence! You are under arrest!”

Then without the officers noticing it, we gave the signal to the workers, who had already understood that things upstairs were getting serious. They stopped the machines, the hammers ceased to beat, the files to file, and everybody crossed their arms looking up at us with determined faces. The most complete silence descended upon the factory. The silence impressed the director and the officers. They ran to the balcony and found two hundred eyes that challenged them.

“What is happening? What are they doing? Why did they stop the machines? Why don’t they work?”

“It seems that they are not pleased to see their delegates mistreated!” we answered them with a mocking smile.

“But what do they want? The pay here is as good as anywhere else,” answers the director imploringly. “Please, tell them to start working, and we’ll talk about that.”

“But I don’t dare to tell that to them. If I tell them that I am

under arrest... they will declare the strike immediately, and abandon the factory. And they wouldn't produce another searchlight."

Keep silent! Attention! Make the salute!" shout the officers, almost apoplectic.

"But officer. I have already told you that I never learned how to make it."

"Ah! And how long have you been a soldier?"

"Two months."

"Two... months... And you learned nothing?"

"Nothing!"

"What an army! What an army!" And he pulls his hairs. "Did you hear what the director said?"

"What did he say?" I played dumb.

"To go down and tell the workers to start working."

"Am I still arrested?"

"We'll speak of that tonight in the barracks! Where is your company?"

"I don't know."

"Good God! You have also lost the company?" I hesitated.
"Answer!"

"Yes... from the first day they made me a soldier."

It was no use to tell stories. I knew that it was the last day for me in the factory, and also the last day to wear the uniform. The important thing was not to let them arrest me. When we told the workers what had happened, they started to work. But before they told the officers that if they arrested me there or in the street when we left, that the next day they would not go there to work.

They didn't dare! At the front they were going from disaster to disaster and they needed the searchlights, to stop the enemy or to run away from him... When we left the factory the comrades and the workers surrounded me. In the alley they had already placed two pairs of carabinieri (a branch of the police force, as I have mentioned before), but they didn't try to arrest me, nor did they follow me. I disappeared!

Escaping The Army

Two days later I tried to pass into Switzerland. I failed! I was forced to return to Milan and hide. Too many policemen knew us—the anarchist youth. And in the house of comrades it wasn't safe. Clelia, one of our comrades, spoke to me about some place where I could hide in the house of a girl.

“You know, she beats the street, but I can assure you that she can be trusted. She also doesn't love the policemen.”

And in the house of that saintly prostitute, in spite of the risk that she was taking, and knowing that I was an anarchist and a deserter, I remained hidden a whole week. We treated each other as brother and sister, I feigning not to know that she was beating the street, and she pretending to ignore that I knew it. As a sign of gratitude, when I left I kissed her as, I suppose, the saints are kissed.

A second try to escape involved Francesco Ghezzi, who many years later was to die in a Stalinist Gulag in Russia, where he had looked for a refuge from the persecution of the Italian police, but then when he wanted to leave Russia, Stalin put him in a concentration camp like many other political refugees; when we learned that he was put in a Gulag we made a campaign in various countries for his liberation, and failed. Only in 1948 an Italian, also a refugee in Russia, accidentally saw Ghezzi very sick the day before he died in the Gulag.

But in 1916 he joined me in my second attempt to escape into Switzerland. It wasn't easy as the border was well guarded on the Italian side, and we had to cross a ten-thousand-foot-high mountain. A comrade who was an alpinist took us to the base of the mountain, and pointing to the summit in view, he said:

“If you succeed in crossing the top without being shot by the guards who are hiding somewhere over there in the glacier, on the other side is Switzerland, and freedom from the butchery of war.

“But remember not to forget a single instant that to cross that glacier at this time of the year, with the ice melting all around you is very dangerous. The ice can break under your feet and you'll fall

under the ice and come out... a few months later... frozen."

It was still morning. We started to climb right away. It was dangerous climbing. We had to jump over crevasses in the ice through which we couldn't see the bottom, at the same time that we had to speed up in order to pass the summit before it would get dark, and be surprised on top on the ice with summer clothes. In jumping over one crevasse, after I had already gone over, Ghezzi lost his balance while jumping and he was going under. He succeeded in grabbing my alpinist stick and I pulled him out of the hole. Higher up I myself fell into a hole, when the ice broke, inside which the water could be heard running. This time we were better prepared and he pulled me out.

When we reached almost the top of the mountain we heard shooting, and saw ice splinters jumping around. The guards were shooting at us, but from the opposite summit, at least a third of a mile away. Too far to put their hands on us. And now we were sure that there were no guards on our summit. So we threw our hats in the air in a sign of triumph, and hiding enough behind the ice in order not to be hit by the bullets of the guards, we reached the top, and down we went on the other side like crazies, and lucky for us that the ice had no crevasses on the other side or we would have broken our necks, so great was our joy. And we shed no tears for the fatherland that we had abandoned, in my case for ever. As slaves of work, raised in misery, like all those who had preceded, few were the grateful souvenirs that we were carrying away from our fatherland. And now we were citizens of the world!

At the foot of the mountain we met the Swiss guards. They had seen us descending and they were waiting for us. They invited us to follow them at the guard post. And after asking us to which city in Switzerland we wanted to go, they gave us a good dinner, and we passed a beautiful night of rest. I chose Geneva, as I intended to learn French first, and Ghezzi chose Lucerne, where an anarchist family he knew was waiting for him. What joy it was in thinking that while on so many fronts in the countries nearby millions of men were

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slaughtering each other for bourgeois fatherlands, we were moving around freely and peacefully in the placid streets and valleys of Switzerland. We seemed so far away from the slaughterhouses, although the slaughtering was going on so near to us. You have to experience it to understand what it means.

Were we really free?... At least for me and three other comrades, not for long. Not even Switzerland loved the enemies of war. Let's not condemn her too much. That paradise of tranquility had hells all around, and that tranquility was not easy for the Swiss to preserve with so much shooting going on outside their homes, and we were no easy residents to handle. We had had too many battles, even if not at the fronts, and our hatred for war in general was putting them in continuous danger by those who looked at their neutrality with envy and intolerance. Particularly since we seemed to have the devil in our bodies, and could not remain in peace a minute. And Switzerland surrounded on all sides by nations in conflict that envied and hated their neutrality, had a hell of a job in keeping in balance their neutrality, and trying to keep in amity with everybody. Particularly with restless elements like us: hundred of anarchists from Italy, France, and Germany, plus hundreds of socialists (the communists didn't exist yet, all passing for socialists), all escaped from the war.

I had arrived only a week before, when the Sunday after my arrival in Geneva, in one of the squares a meeting was organized. Naturally against the war. And how could we anarchists and deserters fail to attend to it? We were all there, and ready to let our voices thunder our protest against the war. The speaker was a French deserter like us by the name of Gilbeau, and others. During one of the pauses of Gilbeau we naturally shouted, like the speaker:

“*À bas la guerre!*” We could shout it only a couple of times, and a group of policemen jumped on four of us anarchists, putting under arrest. So we learned that even peace was a crime.

They never put us through a trial, and they would not tell us how long they intended to keep us in jail. After three months we were convinced that if we didn't start something in order to force them to release us, they would keep us in jail perhaps to the end of the war; as we began to suspect that our arrest was used simply as a warning to all the other deserters outside, to show what would happen to them in case they would get too restless.

And that just for shouting: "Down with war!" We didn't like it. So after the three months we considered that it was already too much of a punishment, for so little a crime. They had put us in a jail outside of Geneva where during the day we worked the land, the four of us completely separated, the only means to exchange a word among us being on Sunday at the mass where we could mix with each other. Imagine the tactic atheists had to use to be able to speak to each other. We decided to go on strike, while, without us knowing anything, the anarchists outside of all languages had started an agitation for our release. We were freed in less than one week, thanks to the fact that the agitation in our favor created a scandal, and the authorities got frightened.

They didn't like any agitation to disturb their peace.

We were freed, but under the conditions that we would reside in the city of La Chaux-de-Fonds until the end of the war, under the daily control of the police. We were forced to accept it, and we were taken to the city of the Jura. Over there every evening we had to pay a visit to the police to show them that we didn't leave the city. And I didn't like it. In a few days the other three comrades found a job and I didn't. The truth is that I wasn't looking for one, because I had decided to go to Lucerne where Ghezzi, with whom I had left Italy, was. I wrote to him immediately, asking him about the possibilities of finding work over there, and he assured me that in mechanics there was plenty. Of course, with the Swiss it was not all idealism. Under the cover of neutrality they were working like hell furnishing instruments of war, impartially, to all the countries in war. That is how well

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neutrality worked... for the Swiss.

As soon as I got the information from Ghezzi, in the morning when the other comrades had already gone to work, I took the train for Lucerne. As the distances in Switzerland are short, in the afternoon I already had a job. But naturally I was risking a new arrest, as I was not allowed to leave La Chaux-de-Fonds without permission. But in the same evening I took the precaution of visiting the police to tell them that I had left the other city because I could not find work, and that in Lucerne I was already working, and I intended to visit them every evening. They laughed, and when next morning the police of La Chaux-de-Fonds came to pick me up to bring me back to their city, seeing that I was already working, they departed without my company. And I suspect that they were glad to get rid of me. One less to watch. And that is what the police of Lucerne for a couple of weeks did.

In the morning one policeman was waiting for me outside the door where I was living, following me until I entered the factory, at noon making sure that I was still there, and in the evening I visited them at their post, shouting my name from the door, and departing. The night was all mine, and I took advantage of that liberty... for my good.

Lucerne was really an ideal city. It has one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, with forests and mountains right outside the home. And when, besides, you find immediately a beautiful and generous girl like Frieda, as I did just a few days after my arrival, it becomes, really, a city paradise. Three days after my arrival the anarchists of Lucerne gave a dance, and I like to hold a girl in my arms while dancing the waltz. Naturally Ghezzi and I didn't miss the dance. And by now I knew already about forty words of German, which I had memorized already in those three days. They were enough to make Frieda understand that I liked her... immensely. And she understood me perfectly. After all I was only twenty-two, and in those circumstances you don't need words to understand each other. In fact my forty words were even enough to fight with her that same evening

while I was taking her home, because she had not conceded enough of her precious person to me, while conceding it too much to my... competitors. It wasn't jealousy, no. Just greediness on my part. She was so beautiful that I hated to have to divide her body with those skunks of men who were trying to steal her from me that evening. After all, even without understanding each other's language we had declared to one another our love... Therefore I considered myself already, in three hours, with rights of... proprietor.

It was Frieda who in only three months taught me to converse in German better than many foreigners in thirty or forty years; as I consider that the quickest and most enjoyable way of learning languages is in making love. In one single evening you can learn as much as ten lessons... and if you had the whole night... And it was really Frieda who in only three months, meeting three or four times each week to walk in the nearby forest in the evenings, all alone, us two, while waiting for the owners of the apartment where I had rented a room to go to bed, and we two, in the dark passing through their room to reach my bed... where Frieda, between one kiss and the other was giving me lessons of participle, past, present and future. The lessons continuing also under the covers in whispers. If one doesn't learn a language under such favorable conditions, one must really be a donkey. Then it is better that he or she renounce languages and dedicate his time to something else.

Still the fact that every day I had to go to the police irritated me quite a bit. I was feeling as if the police had a rope around my neck. So after four months—with the promise from Frieda that she would make the short trip to visit me often—I asked them to give me permission to go to live and work in Zurich. They gave it to me immediately, obviously very happy to free themselves of me. It cost them too many walks from my home to the job and return, the lazy bums! With abundance of tears, at the departure of the train for Zurich, Frieda said goodbye to me until a week later when being in a

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double holiday she would pass two days in my company over there.

And her word was gold. That is why I love women so much, and am so grateful to them. And I am happy to report that in all of my life, in women I have only found... angels. No treasure can substitute for them. And I feel pity for those men who only lament over them; all, I am convinced, unjustified... Let these men full of afflictions understand that there is no substitute for women. Either them or... desperation!

Zurich little by little became the center of the Italian deserters, anarchists or of other ideologies. The anarchists were the majority, as they were those who opposed most zealously the war. In all of Switzerland we must have been a few hundred Italians. And there were a good number of French deserters, although some of the French deserters went to Spain. Then there were the German deserters. Most of the deserters remained in the part of Switzerland that spoke their language, but the Italians were scattered all over the country. We were the majority, perhaps only because Italy entered the war later, giving us more time to make our plans of escape, while French and German deserters were caught almost by surprise, and the borders closed on them, making it more difficult for them to leave. And there was probably more patriotism among them, their standard of living being much higher than ours, while we could hardly live on our salaries of working people. Still, in Zurich, the German deserters were quite numerous, mostly socialists, which demonstrates that not all of them were in favor of the war, considering also that many German deserters escaped also to Holland. And curiously in Zurich I didn't meet one single French deserter. (Like the Americans, the French are not lovers of other languages. In general both think that their language is enough to get along in life, while other races seem eager to add another language to theirs.)

In Zurich things were very peaceful for us deserters. The police didn't bother us at all. I, having saved a few hundred francs

working in Lucerne, and hating to work in factories, decided to use the francs to open a bookstore. I called it “*Libreria Internazionale*”, although I didn’t have money enough to buy books in other languages than Italian. The internationalism referred only to the clients... who were not there.

And as soon as I received the batch of books from Italy, the Italian government forbade the exportation of Italian books to Switzerland. So the store was destined to fail from the beginning even without the lack of clients, who didn’t show up anyway, probably also because I didn’t have the junk books that they would have wanted, or simply because in that section of the city the reading public of books didn’t exist. So since the rent was very low, each time I sold a book... I ate. That kept me going for a number of months. I must say also that at my arrival in Zurich I went to work some time in a factory, also as a lather, and that had added to my... capital.

If the business in the store wasn’t brilliant, the place was convenient for the comrades to meet, and if they needed, for information. But the bookstore could not last forever, and finally I had to declare... bankruptcy. Because I had any debts to pay? No, I didn’t owe a penny to anybody, but I had simply finished eating... the books.

And I said that the police were letting be in peace?... Later on we learned that secretly the police were watching us. They rented an apartment just across the street, and behind the curtains were watching us all the time. Imagine if the police can be... trusted. Luckily we were not conspiring against the secret State institutions, due to the enormous respect the anarchists always have for the bourgeois or any other authoritarian regimes...

The reality is that the Swiss people at that time, whether they spoke Italian, German, or French, were very little inclined to revolts of a social character. Perhaps they were too well off, and being very little revolutionary, the government was leaving the people the maximum of freedom. The Swiss didn’t feel—at least then—the will of revolting

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against social injustices, because they were very little oppressed, and also very little conscious that they were exploited, although Switzerland has been the refuge of so many revolutionaries.

I'm speaking of the generality of the population of the 1916-17, because I know very well the history of the watchmakers of the Jura who followed Bakunin in the First International. This tendency to placidity and non-resistance to social evils has been the despair of foreign revolutionaries who lived among them. But we, though, thought that it was not unmovable. We had the illusion that with the extraordinary circumstances that surrounded us perhaps this mountain could be moved. At least the Swiss youth, we were hoping. And for a brief period we had reason to hope. The mountain really moved. Not dangerously for the authorities, but it moved.

The war had been going on for three years. The tiredness and the nervousness had invaded the spirits of the armies of the nations, fighting. The Russian Revolution had already taken place and subterranean rumblings of revolt could be heard on all fronts, and in the rear. It seemed that we were at the vigil of a revolutionary explosion, and that only a spark was needed that from a central point would simultaneously light the fire on all fronts, raising them in revolt against those responsible for the monstrous massacre. We, for a moment, hoped to be able to produce that spark which could let loose that European, revolutionary, conflagration, as Switzerland was at the center of the nations in conflict.

Our hope was folly, but then revolutionists have their heads a little out of... equilibrium. And without this folly the world would never change, and revolutions would perhaps be impossible.

In our enthusiasm for revolution we ended up believing that we could provoke a general strike in Zurich with the hope that then it would spread to all Switzerland, and from there, like an irresistible avalanche would spread over the borders setting on fire all the nations in war. We succeeded in only having a partial strike with some con-

flicts with the police, and even an assault on the jail in an attempt to free the prisoners as victims of capitalism. We as deserters could not take the lead of the strike, but a group of young socialists, being Swiss, had promised that they would take the responsibility to push forward the strike, officially with the condition that we would support them to the end. And let it be said that the Germans and Swiss are hard to move, but once in movement they are persistent. In the struggle with the forces of the State they demonstrated as much tenacity as any anarchist—just as revolutionary. Even they deluded themselves that they were at the vanguard of the revolution in Europe, started by themselves. And if we had succeeded they would have been right.

The strike, quite violent, could last only three or four days. It didn't spread itself to the other cities. The spark must have been too weak. But for its unexpected violence it created a sensation and a scandal in all of Switzerland. The police even discovered some suspicious things, obviously not intended to explode, but only to scare them a little, perhaps as a notice that if they used violence, others could. But the police understood it otherwise, or feigned to understand it otherwise, and in their fright perhaps thought that it was intended to really hurt them. An absurd thing, since everybody loves the police, so says the police.

Incapable of understanding that even Swiss people were among the organizers of such a violent strike, the press did a great can-can, saying that those responsible for such not-so-Swiss actions could only be the deserters. A slander, naturally... The result of the violent campaign against the Italian deserters was that the government threatened to pass a law, which they finally did pass, to intern all the deserters until the end of the conflict, by occupying them in public works. For us anarchists that meant returning to the army, and we were not disposed to submit too easily. But how to escape from it? We were totally surrounded. On one side Italy, on the other France, and on the rest Germany. We were free, but in a kind of jail. If we wanted to get out we had to break the circle.

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After discussing the situation with the comrades, we arrived at the conclusion that the only way of getting out of the internment was to discover if it was possible to cross Germany without being arrested, and to arrive in the Scandinavian countries, which were also neutral. A very difficult enterprise, and still more dangerous for nationals of a nation at war with Germany. If caught illegally in their territory they might take us for spies and shoot us, particularly as they hated the Italians, with reason, since from being their allies we went to war against them.

Again, being the one who spoke, by that time, better German than our other closest comrades, naturally I offered myself to try the adventure. Another comrade by the name of Dario Fieramonte said he would come with me. Then if we succeeded in reaching some Scandinavian country we would tell the other comrades how to follow us.

Near the border, the Swiss train crosses a short tract of German territory. It was a question of jumping off the train on the run, and if we didn't break our necks or get arrested, we would hide ourselves in the wood, and from there proceed. And since we didn't see any guards on that short stretch of German territory we jumped off the train, and as it was already dark, we thought that nobody had seen us. But as soon as we entered the wood and thought ourselves safe... there the soldiers were waiting for us, their guns ready to shoot, if we had offered any resistance. But we were unarmed and we realized that we had no chance to resist. And naturally they took us to a jail in the nearest village or town.

And so we failed. As soon as they let us, we wrote to the comrades informing them of how things stood, and that they should seek another way to freedom. But before our letter arrived to them, another comrade, thinking that we had succeeded, followed us, and he too was arrested, and brought to our prison. But in the two months we passed there we never discovered his presence, although he saw us once. But they didn't let him talk to us. After two months,

as they didn't tell us what they intended to do with us, we naturally got impatient, and we started a hunger strike, the same as we had done already in Switzerland, as my companion was also one of the four who had passed three months in jail over there. Our request was: either they let us proceed to the Scandinavian countries, or they let us return to Switzerland. After a few days of strike, the director of the jail had us brought to his office and explained to us that they were trying to find a job for us in Germany, but that nobody wanted to take the risk to take us, as we belonged to a country at war with them; but if we had the patience to wait until they found a place for us they would continue to try. He was sure that they would succeed; but if we didn't want to wait, we could go back to Switzerland right away.... However before we decided that, it was better that we read the documents that he presented to us. I threw a look at them and saw that it was a request from the Swiss police for our extradition, as participants in the revolt of Zurich. What... a lie! But enough to convince us that if we returned we would be received as welcomed guests... in jail, which Fieramonte and I knew already from the three months we had passed in them together. So we told the chief jailer that since we were already in jail, why change... domicile? We'll stay since they were kind enough to look for a job for us outside. He laughed. And the... barbarians—as they called them in the allied countries—kept their word, for they soon found a job for me, being a lather, but Fieramonte, having no profession, had to wait a few more days. I wanted to wait for him, but he insisted that I go out as he had an uncle residing in Germany for forty years, and once out I could notify him about where he was, and surely he would get him out of jail. And that is exactly what we did, and three days after he also was free, and living with his uncle. But I was in another village, quite isolated, although everybody was treating me kindly, but as a curiosity.

That didn't bother me, but it was the isolation that I didn't like. I prefer cities, and if big, the better, since they offer more variety of interesting things to occupy free time. But after work in that vil-

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lage there was nothing to occupy the time. I could not console myself with a girl because I belonged to an “enemy” country at war with them, and some of them were still patriotic, and everybody knew each other there; if a girl would have been willing, it would have been too scandalous if any would have dared to accept my look of invitation to go and get lost in the woods that surrounded us (since we were in the Black Forest). So if I remained there I would have been condemned to... abstinence. A life not of my choice. So I had to find a way of getting out of it and going to work in a place where I would not be watched so closely by everybody, since the village had only one street. And naturally there the police didn’t have to watch me, since I was under everybody’s eyes.

Just the same after a couple of weeks, on Sunday, I took the train to pay a visit to Stuttgart, just a couple of hours away. Not a small city. There the first thing I did upon getting off the train was to enter in a place to take a coffee. And what was my surprise, one in a million? I met the comrade I had left in Switzerland, who told me that he had been in the same jail we were. We celebrated our freedom. Being a bricklayer he had plenty of work, with all that the guns were tearing down.

When in the evening I returned to my village the police were waiting for me all furious. They informed me that I was not allowed to leave the village, and told the man at the station not to give me any ticket, if I presented myself. So how to get out and go some other place? After asking Fieramonte if it was possible to find a job where he was, which was a city of about 20,000 people, and being told by him that there were two big factories in town, I asked in writing the military authorities of the sector for permission to go there, by informing them that over there I would be living with an Italian family. In just three days I got the permission signed by the general commanding the zone, which was a military zone, as we were not too far from the front; and in clear night the wind would bring us the rumbling of the artillery. Next day I was at the station to buy the train ticket.

“You know that I am forbidden to sell you a ticket, by the police,” said the man.

“Please inform the police that I want to say goodbye to them, if they are gracious enough to come here,” I answered him.

In two minutes the police were there. When they saw the permission signed by the general there was nothing to stop me. So they said goodbye to me, once more happy to get rid of such an unruly inhabitant.

The new place was Schwenningen, in the very heart of the Black Forest. And the very next day I was working. As a lather, naturally, of whom they had great need. The city was a center of watches and related products, naturally changed to produce war material as they were doing in all nations in the war. I worked in a room with only another lather, who happened to be a nationalist fanatic in favor of the war. With only him to talk to all day, although the factory employed two thousand workers, men and women, we could not avoid having, sometimes, very heated discussions, he in favor of war, and I against. Otherwise the work was very satisfactory, since we only produced pieces to repair broken down machines. And I was eating and sleeping in the house of Fieramonte’s uncle... who happened to be keeping two cows, and therefore we had plenty of milk, while all around there was scarcity of food for the general population. The work of the uncle was repairing roads, and Fieramonte was working with him. And although every evening we had to show up at the police place, for the rest we were totally free to do whatever we wanted with our time.

I took full advantage of that freedom. It was at the beginning of May of 1918, and the city being small, in ten minutes’ walk, after work, I was up there on the hill, and in the middle of the forest all blooming, in a perfect peace, all alone, reading some book for an hour or two before it would get dark. It was really like a dream, saddened only by the thought that only a short flight away millions of

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men were slaughtering each other like so many crazy people, for the curse of nationalism, which put people against people in fratricidal madness. And when soon after in my solitude came Swanhilde to keep me company in those evening hours, my situation was really a happy one.

But considering the tragic circumstances that surrounded us all around, and the butchering that was going on not too many miles away on the battlefields, my happiness could not last too long. It was impossible to forget war almost at the door, particularly with the lunatic working near me provoking continuous discussions, and hating the fact that an enemy was working so peacefully over there, while probably he had brothers or friends in the trenches risking their lives at the hands of my countrymen. So knowing that in the other big factory I could easily find the same kind of work, I decided to change. But before changing I wanted to do something against the war, as I was feeling guilty to be so in peace, and not to do whatever I could to help to end the massacre.

In the other departments some young socialists were working. And as I didn't hide that I was an anarchist and a deserter, soon we became friendly during the lunch hours. And as they themselves were against the war, we planned to sabotage some machines while everybody had gone home to lunch, and for almost an hour we remained alone in the factory. A very favorable situation for such work as a contribution to end the war. In a few days we collected emery from the grinding machines, and one lunch time, unseen by anybody, in a few minutes we put a few grains of emery in the oil ducts of about twenty of the most valuable machines, knowing that in a couple of weeks those machines would be out of order. And that would give me time to change place without raising suspicions, since I was the one who had most to lose if discovered, as I was an "enemy" subject. We had all agreed on that, knowing that if caught I surely would be shot, even without trial, being in a war zone.

So, mission accomplished against the war, I changed factory.

In less than three weeks the young socialists, when we passed each other in the street without stopping, began to signal to me that the machines we had sabotaged had started to break down. And I knew that the hour of danger was coming near me, if any suspicion would fall on me. And it did, although I could never have known what happened. I could only assume.

One morning while I was working, two men in civilian clothes came to the factory, and they arrested me, giving me just the time to change clothes. They were military policemen, and they took me to Carlsruhe, where they put me in jail. During the trip in the train they wouldn't tell me a thing about why they were arresting me or where they were taking me. They would only say that they had the order to arrest me, and deliver me to the military authorities, a bad sign... for my life. They didn't even give me time to notify Fieramonte and his uncle and family, nor my sweet girl, of what was happening to me.

The jail where they left me was a small one. But the conditions were not bad. Food was sufficient, and I had a large and clean cell, with even a regular toilet inside. It is true that they never let me out during the day to get some fresh air, but otherwise I could not complain about conditions. As a consolation there was a young and beautiful prostitute, probably arrested for exercising her honest profession, who they allowed in the hall to do the cleaning, and who, when the jailer was not around, would open the little door of my cell and send me kisses to give me courage. A play which was quite entertaining, since there was nothing else to break the monotony. But the weeks passed and nobody would talk to me or let me know what the accusation was, although I suspected that not having caught anybody doing the sabotaging, the lunatic who was working with me, even if he did not accuse me directly of doing it (as nobody saw us do it) must at least have insinuated to the military police that I had sabotaged the machines. Or the police might have arrived at the suspicion themselves, never thinking that Germans, so patriotic, would

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have committed such treason against the Fatherland; although as the war was not going well for the proud German armies, the feeling that the war was lost was spreading around ever more in the general population, and particularly among the youth. As a full month had passed without any hopeful sign, I began to suspect the worst. Life in wartime is very cheap, and if it belongs to an enemy subject it is worth nothing. So I began to think about a possible escape. I asked the girl if there was a hospital in the jail. She told me no, because it was too small, and that when a prisoner was seriously sick they would take him or her to the nearby civilian hospital outside where they would be under constant watch. There was some hope there, as once outside could offer some chance of escape.

So I stopped eating, secretly, and when they would bring me the meals I would throw them in the toilet, and wash them away. And I figured that without food it would weaken me so much, that in eight or ten days I could play the game of the very sick, and I would be taken to the hospital outside. It didn't work as I had planned. Ten days after I had begun the hunger strike I thought that I was weakened enough. At noon, before they brought lunch, I laid down and scratched my forehead on the pavement until it was all bleeding, tied the towel around my head to feign a headache, then when I heard that they were coming around with the food, with my feet inside the toilet I stretched on the floor feigning to have fainted from sickness... When the jailors opened the opening to pass me the food and saw me on the floor they got alarmed. They opened the door and rushed to me, and seeing the towel around my head they began to say that I had put it around my neck to commit suicide, to escape the punishment for the sabotage. Naturally I was pretending to be unconscious. But in hearing those comments I realized that my act was like a confession of guilt... so I woke up instantly, and I told them that I fainted because I was very sick, not because I wanted to commit suicide, for which I had no reason. So they called the doctor, and he, with a smile, said that I was sick because I needed more food. And aside he winked

at me, having understood that I was playing some game. He was a doctor from the outside, the jail having no doctor. So I failed. It was a crazy scheme anyhow. But for a prisoner in my dangerous position any scheme is a ray of hope.

So since this trick didn't work I decided to put things squarely down with the military commanders, since the order to arrest me came from them. I got the name of the one in command, and I wrote a long letter to him asking to be interrogated, but without mentioning the sabotage, since I was not supposed to know about it. And I told him that if I was arrested because I was an anarchist, that they knew from the beginning of my staying in Germany that I was, so why now were they keeping me in jail without committing any crime? It was precisely because I was an anarchist that instead of being there on the Italian front shooting at them I was in Germany. And if they didn't want me there, why didn't they let me go to some Scandinavian country, which was the only reason I came to Germany?

The general had me in his office the same day.

“Ah! You don't know why you are here?”

“I haven't the faintest idea... unless you tell me.”

“Many machines have been sabotaged in the place you worked before.”

“Really?... And what do I have to do with that? This is news to me.”

“So you are innocent?”

“Absolutely!” I forcefully proclaimed.

“We know that you had a hand in it, but we can't prove it.”

“Precisely because I had nothing to do with it. Why would I do such a thing?”

“Let's put aside the comedy in order not to lose time uselessly. We know positively that you are the saboteur, perhaps not alone, but for your luck we cannot reveal who has denounced you, because he is still useful where he is, in case that because of fatigue about the war, revolts were to explode among the discontented workers. Therefore

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we have decided to free you, but under certain conditions. An agent will conduct you back to Schwenningen, temporarily, and in a week or two you will be transferred to another city where you will not be able to do any more harm in the war.

“But now tell me frankly. We are accused of being barbarians, and we leave you in liberty, unharmed. If it had been a German, even a deserter, who had committed sabotage like you have done, what would have happened to him in Italy or France? Would they shoot him?”

“But how could they do the infamy of shooting him if he had been innocent like me, when the great Italian and French patriots claim that they are less barbaric than the Germans?”

“We have understood each other.” And he looked at me, hardly able to refrain from smiling. “So you don’t cease to be innocent... Therefore be ready. In a few moments somebody will come to pick you up. And don’t commit the repetition of what you did already, or another time you might have to do with a general more ‘barbarian’ than me.”

A cop in civilian clothes took me back to Schwenningen, but there the police refused to receive me.

“We don’t take responsibility for this guy.”

I don’t know how at the end they agreed to let me stay. I suppose because the cop assured them that it was only temporary, and that soon I would be transferred elsewhere, as the general said. So I was able to enjoy another ten or twelve days of joy with Swanhilde in the beauty and solitude of the Black Forest. And Swanhilde insisted on passing the last night with me, a great risk for her, as she was very known in town, for having given concerts with her husband, who had not been back from the front for over a year... poor girl. I and Fieramonte, in order not to compromise his uncle after my arrest, had left them and taken two rooms in a house where the owners were living on the ground floor, and we each had rooms on the first floor. But it happened that when in the morning I wanted to get Swanhilde out of the house before it got light in order to save her from being recognized, and silently we

were coming down the stairs, the wife and husband jumped out of their rooms and turned on the light. Luckily, suspecting some trick, I had put my coat over Swanhilde's head, and after a few threats to each other with the owners wanting to see who I had brought to their "decent" house, and I answering: "over my dead body" I told them to go to sleep or I would call for the help of Fieramonte, who was still in bed, shaming them for being so curious. They went back to their beds, and we left the house safely.

My beauty didn't want to go back to her house right away. She insisted on waiting in a field until the train would pass two hours later, to greet me a last time, knowing that we would never see each other again. And she was there, all frozen, poor dear, and I and Fieramonte (he had seen her also the first time we met in a confectioner's shop) greeted her both from the platform of the old train, throwing each other kisses out of sight of the passengers inside the car. Although we never saw each other again, we exchanged letters for a number of years, and today I can still see her there in the field waving goodbye to us. There are memories that never disappear from the mind, while others vanish from memory like the breath of the wind.

They sent us to Offenbach, this time without the company of the police, although at our arrival we had to pay a visit to the police, to tell them that they had the joy of our company. We were also supposed to present ourselves to them every evening after work (we both found work the same day of our arrival), but right away we saw that the police didn't say anything, we began to show up only twice a week. We never dared to stop altogether for fear that they would put us back on a daily basis. But except for the first day, they never told us one single word. The war was going badly for them already toward the end of the summer. From the door we used to shout our names and go, and they would mark it in their book, and that was all.

Anti-war propaganda in Offenbach seemed a waste of time. It didn't make any impression on those people. Why? That probably is

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why they sent us there. We were in a sort of spiritual isolation, and after a while we didn't bother anymore. If they liked to be butchered and to butcher... That was with the men. With the women, if it was a waste of time to talk about war, they didn't mind speaking of something else. The women were the most lonesome, since practically all the young men were away after practically four years of fighting. So since we couldn't do anything else, it would have been cruelty not to give and receive some consolation in our hours of leisure. It was therefore once more the girls who saved us from lonesomeness, although we knew that all that was only temporary, as the war seemed to be coming to an end. To help myself pass the time I even bought a violin for fifteen marks with the intention of becoming a Paganini... in three months' time. Alas! I didn't have the time to discover if I had it in me, as the events were pressing on us, and I had time to only get half a dozen lessons. What we believed to be the call of the social revolution in Europe was sounding in Berlin, and it seemed that it was sounding just for us. And therefore we escaped from Offenbach, and we ran to Berlin where the Spartacist uprising was being prepared.

Four years of butchering had come to an end and... peace had descended upon the battlefields. The German armies were fleeing among the thunders of revolt. The disorganization and hunger was alive practically everywhere. Four years of struggle and sacrifices, so useless, all in order to arrive at defeat, had filled souls with desperation and rage against who was responsible of that national tragedy. The emperor of the Germans had to save his skin by running away from the people. He was wise, because if he had stayed he could have lost his head. His star had fallen in shame and crime. As soon as we received the news of what was happening in Berlin, Fieramonte and I were dying to go there and be a part of it. But the police didn't want to give us the permission to leave the city, so we decided to leave without it at the risk of getting arrested, naturally. But from Offenbach to Berlin there are many hours, and to ride the train it was

necessary to have permission, so how could we arrive there without being arrested? My violin saved us.

The violinist who was giving me lessons and who was the director of a small orchestra in a café, for five marks gave me a contract, in which it said that Fieramonte and I had to go to Berlin to give concerts. Our hair, long enough to seem musicians, helped our trip although we couldn't play. So prepared, without saying anything to the police, we sneaked away, the false contract serving us as a permit. We only feared that in the train the travelers might get the idea of asking us to play for them. To avoid such embarrassment we had agreed that Fieramonte—who I was presenting as a great pianist, although he didn't know a note, and besides was tone deaf—would never open his mouth to speak a word of German. And so we arrived in Berlin safely.

It was Sunday. The first thing we saw were big placards announcing a public meeting in which Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht would be speaking. It was just what we needed to become immediately well informed about what was going on on the side of the... revolution. We left the violin and our things at the station, and went to the meeting. To make revolution we didn't need the violin. And besides our artistic career ended at the moment we set foot in Berlin and the police didn't stop us. At last we escaped from its control. From now on we were free to do what we wanted without having to report to the police every day or any day.

The huge place of the meeting was overflowing with people. A great ferment and enthusiasm seemed to agitate all the people present. The expectation was enormous as at the vigil of great happenings. The revolution was really in the air. Everybody waited for it, everybody desired it, all seemed ready to act and realize it. We were really in our milieu. A great feeling of brotherhood was joining us to that anonymous mass of people, even if our ideas about what the social revolution had to be was different. That was not the moment of ideological disquisitions, but of action against the hated bourgeoisie. At that time we still thought that the distance from us to Marxism was

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not insuperable, and that once the revolution was realized we would be able to find a way to agree with each other for a free reciprocal life without conflicts. We didn't even know at that moment of revolutionary enthusiasm that an abyss would separate us precisely from the extreme left of Marxism, as the degeneration of that Marxism into totalitarian communism was impossible to conceive at that moment, although our anarchist predecessors had guessed that original vice from the very beginning. And we should have been warned. Enthusiasm's blindness! Blindness for wanting to make a revolution at all risks, and at any price, as a romantic adventure, and disposed to risk everything on the balance of hope. That is the vice and the weakness of revolutionary romanticism always disposed to make jumps into the unknown in the illusion of changes in our lives; vice and weakness for which the anarchists always pay dearly. But in that environment, so excited as we were by the hope of a revolution in the near future, very few calm reflections could be made. We two were transported over that irresistible wave of enthusiasm, to which the speeches of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht added their fire. They seemed such sincere revolutionaries, that we, although we were separated from them by our ideological conception, thought that in them we saw two idealists dedicated to the creation of a better and freer life. And for lack of an anarchist movement, we decided to work with them. And from that moment, to the collapse of that revolutionary movement, we were part—though independents—of the Spartacist movement in the trajectory toward the aim that we thought would be a triumphant revolution. But instead it only led to a crushing defeat.

In order to understand well what has been the Spartacist movement we have to rapidly sketch what were the forces that took part and fought in it. A few notes will suffice to give the picture. In 1875 Lassalle's organization joined with the Marxist socialists. Together they formed the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*—SPD. From the beginning various tendencies manifested themselves in the

SPD, but the unity in the party was kept until the outbreak of the First World War, when came the split.

From its foundation the SPD had a phenomenal development, stopped only when Bismarck in 1878 introduced his draconian laws against socialism. This restrained its numerical development, but pushed it toward the left. In realizing the error, in 1880 Bismarck abolished those laws, trying with progressive laws to capture the interest of the socialists for the State. He succeeded in great measure. The socialists became ever more tamed in the parliamentary struggle. And then they came to think that in a bourgeois State they had interests to preserve. Those, for example, of the congressmen, who after 1890 gained 35 seats. From then on the SPD increased enormously. From the 3% of the votes in 1871 they received 38.8 per cent in the last election before the war, for a total of 4,250,329 votes and 110 congressmen. And the members of the party increased still more. From 277,650 members in 1891, to 2,548,763 in 1913, and the property of the unions from 423,845 marks to 88,069,295 marks. An enormous wealth to preserve.

The professionals of the SPD reached 4,100, and the clerks of the organization reached about 11,000. A colossal corporation. The SPD had 94 newspapers, and by 1914 had invested 20,000,000 marks in the national economy. Many people were interested in preserving so many places of work, and so much capital. We have to keep this in mind in order to understand why the totality of the deputies of the SPD three days after the declaration of war voted for the war credits in spite of their preceding profession of international pacifism. And among those deputies who voted for the credits was also Karl Liebknecht... to preserve the discipline and the unity in the party, it was said.

But once the war had started this patriotic and bellicose discipline didn't last long. The Social Democratic Party divided itself into three factions: those of the right, those of the center, and those of the left. A division which could be quite arbitrary if it were not well defined what constitutes the right, and what constitutes the left. For

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me now, after the tragic experiment of communism in power since the Russian revolution, the extreme left is the extreme reactionary right, because from the anarchist point of view every totalitarianism is fascism pure and clear, even if some anarchists in love with left phraseology would not agree with me. But now in order to understand each other well I will use the regular definition.

To the right of the SPD were Scheidemann, Noske, and Ebert; to the center, Kautsky, Bernstein, and Haase; to the left, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Clara Zetkin. The center having refused in 1917 to vote for the military credits were expelled by the party from the Executive Committee, therefore the expelled founded their own party in Gotha in April 1917: the *Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*—USPD. Those of the left, including the *Spartakusbund*, remained in the SPD, in the hopes, they said, of making it change roads; but in not obtaining results, the *Spartakusbund* decided to enter in the USPD in order to obtain its protection as numerically the *Spartakusbund* counted no more than a 1,000 members, in spite of its great popularity; while it is calculated that the USPD had more than 100,000 members, for some 200,000 for the SPD. Besides fourteen newspapers, with about 125,000 subscribers went to the USPD. An important force.

I will not extend myself to explaining what separated the right from the center, because except for the question of war, and some tactical differences, the difference in ideology at that moment was minimal. I shall define better, instead, the difference in ideas of the two leaders of the *Spartakusbund*, which is what interests us more here. Rosa Luxemburg was against centralism and control of the economy by members of the party, and she believed that the revolution was the spontaneous revolt of the masses who made it. In this Lenin didn't agree; he based everything on the control of the chiefs of the party, the Bolshevik party. Rosa didn't exclude a certain direction from the party, but for her the more important revolutionary element was the revolt of the masses. In this Liebknecht agreed with her, thinking that the

strength of the party came directly from the masses, while the Social Democratic International considered it a utopian anarchist concept.

Rosa Luxemburg, as well as Liebknecht, didn't disown the parliament, but they considered it useful more than anything else as a tribunal to help propagandize the masses, not to transform society. For her trust in the spontaneity of the masses she was accused of adoring the masses, and denying the role of the party. It is tragic that the two principal personalities of the Spartacist revolt were assassinated, because it would have been interesting to know if their communism would have been more democratic and less hateful and criminal than the one that infests us today. For the tragedy of the working class of the world and of humanity in general we only know the totalitarian communist of the Moscow type, and that of Lenin, Mao, Castro, and equal curses.

Due to the demobilization and the disorganization that existed at that moment in Berlin, work was impossible to find. To say the truth we had very little desire to close ourselves up in a factory; therefore we didn't even look for that kind of work. We wanted to remain near to the center of the agitation. And as we didn't have money because the trip had emptied our pockets, in order to make a living we became vendors in the streets of the Spartacist daily: *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag) directed by Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. That was how we kept closely in contact with the Spartacist movement, coming to know well the principal protagonists. It wasn't a peaceful life, because the agitation was increasing continuously toward the explosive point. And the rumors of plots and counter-plots, coups and counter-coups were heard daily.

One day, for example, the rumor ran that that night they wanted to assassinate Liebknecht, and they came to the newspaper to ask me and Fieramonte if we wanted to participate in the defense of Liebknecht's apartment in order to make the *attentat* fail. They gave us two pistols each, and a few of us passed two entire nights in Liebknecht's apartment. Perhaps warned that we were there waiting for

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them, nobody attacked, and we returned to the newspaper.

In 1919, when I returned clandestinely for a few months to Italy, I wrote (I think under the pen name of “Beobachter”) in *Il Libertario* of the Spartacist movement, and of the reasons, according to myself, of its defeat. I would like to reread what I wrote then in order to see, at more than sixty years’ distance of that important revolutionary happening, if my observations and reflections would still be the same. Sixty years are many in the life of any individual. The experience and the distance makes us see things much more clearly. Perhaps I would not approve what I did myself. Wiser reflections can be had after one passes the events of history through sieves. Then all the threads are put together and we can clearly analyze all the elements that provoked the actions. And besides in our youth, generally, we act before we have well reflected on each thing from every angle, and calculated all the consequences. And sometimes the results and the consequences are the opposite of what we had aimed for. They are the accidents of the revolutionists because there is no science of revolutions in spite of certain Marxist pretended teachers. What is called Marxism-Leninism is only communist imperialism, not revolution. In revolutions all is chaos, accidental, unforeseeable, and good... luck. They are the emotions of the masses that manifest themselves in bursts of revolt. The Marxist strategists don’t base themselves on science to triumph, but on double-play, treason, hypocrisy, treacherous murder. Which are the tactics that communism applies everywhere to triumph. That is their science, or tactic raised to dogma. The anarchists want none of it.

Anarchists in their revolutionary enthusiasm have committed errors, but they have paid personally for those errors. It is the glory of anarchism that not one anarchist has ever ruled, exploited or oppressed one single human being in the name of anarchy. The rulers and oppressors today are all bourgeois fascists or communist fascists, all brands of fascists having in common that they all want to be absolute rulers and exploiters of nations. And nobody will find one single anarchist among those murderers. We anarchists have never

made victims by our oppression. And this because we have never used power over other human being, with one lie or another. And the anarchists warn all men and women as they have always warned them in the past: “Do you want to be free, and not be exploited? Never let anybody, with no matter what excuse, rule over you!”

Besides the Spartacists there were also other small groups of the left, and a part of the socialists belonging to the USPD who agitated and were preparing the revolution. There was also an important group which also worked in the same direction with the name of *Revolutionäre Obleute*. These worked underground, as conspirators. They weren’t many, but their importance was in the fact that the RO was composed of functionaries of the unions which, naturally, controlled large contingents of working people. They considered themselves the leaders of the revolution, and according to them the masses had to serve as shock troops. They used to circulate rumors that secretly they were preparing these shock “troops” well disciplined and armed by them. And they also were saying that the Spartacists were just romantics, who spoke a lot, but practically did very little for the revolution. From my observations I think that their pretensions were in great part fantasy and they only contained a small part of reality. But it is also true that the Spartacists and the other leftists were guilty of “revolutionary gymnastics”, as these leftist “conspirators” from the unions accused them of the numerous political demonstrations that these Spartacists continuously organized, which ended by tiring the masses and giving them a sense of frustration and disillusionment, due to the few results obtained, for the enormous sacrifices that the masses had to make.

The proof of this was given by the revolution at the beginning of November 1918 which preceded the Spartacist revolt by two months, and was what really ended the war. This revolution of November wasn’t organized, neither by leaders, nor by leftist groups. It sprang spontaneously from the masses, who had enough of the war.

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It was the result of the military defeat which taught them the futility of any further sacrifices.

The years of war had not passed in patriotic peace and harmony. From year to year the discontent and the resistance to the war was ever more pronounced among the working class. We could see that among all the strata of the population in the last year of war that we passed in Germany, in or out of jail. The real warmongers had been reduced to a few fanatics, the rest of the population either kept silent or were in doubt or confidentially they approved us, especially among the socialist youth who had lost most of the respect for their warmonger leaders.

There had also been public demonstrations against the war. Already in April 1917 there was a general strike in the war industry in Berlin, where more than 300,000 workers left their jobs. The same protest was repeated in January 1918 with another strike of 500,000 workers. And these strikes extended themselves to many other centers, and took place against the patriotic will of their socialist leaders. And it is natural that in October 1918, when even the military command in the person of Hindenburg and Ludendorff admitted the military defeat, the people felt the spirit of revolt.

Carl Liebknecht was released from prison the 25th of October, 1918, by an amnesty. Rosa Luxemburg didn't enjoy the amnesty because she was in jail only in preventive custody. She was freed by the popular revolution the 8th of November. That is how the revolution started. The officers of the navy in Kiel didn't want to surrender. They wanted to go out to sea and give a last battle in which the boats would be sunk by the superior boats of the enemy, and they would have found a glorious death that history would have remembered. This bravery wasn't approved by the sailors who cared a damn about patriotic glory. So they refused to obey the officers command, and formed the Workers' and Sailors' Councils, to which later on the peasants and little bourgeoisie were added. That was November 7,

1918.

By November 8th the revolt had extended to numerous cities, among them Hamburg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Hanover, Nuremberg, Cologne, Dusseldorf, and others. It arrived in Berlin only the 9th of November, which city was the center of the anti-war agitation, where the revolutionaries were mostly concentrated. Which demonstrates that it was not the leaders who prepared and made this revolution of November, but the masses, who found the initiators in their own ranks. This seemed to give reason to Rosa Luxemburg who claimed against Lenin, that more than the dirigisme of the Party, it was the spontaneity of the masses that was the most important element of the revolution.

Fieramonte and I in our confinement at Offenbach, which city was rather slow moving, in reading all what was happening in other cities, and particularly in Berlin—the dream of our desires—we were naturally suffering due to our great desire to get moving, especially also because the police insisted in keeping us under their control. And so we had to organize our escape, direction: Berlin.

As a last comment on the revolution of November 1918 I have to say, that, if it had been a spontaneous action of the masses, perhaps only in Berlin did it assume a real revolutionary character. In the other cities the councils of workers, peasants and sailors, which included many elements of the petty bourgeoisie, limited themselves to substituting the police and the government's organs in the function of maintaining public order, without any program of a revolutionary character. There were even those who said that the majority of the Councils were dominated by the bourgeoisie, which wanted to hinder the workers from making a social revolution. Due to the little that they did in the revolutionary direction, we would have to admit that in part the accusation was true. It was therefore up to Berlin to try, really, for a social revolution. I will say also that this revolution that went from the 7th to the 9th of November 1918, which embraced almost all the cities of Germany, was made without shedding a drop of

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blood, as some cities afterward gloried in saying. Some of the councils of workers, soldiers, and peasants who had substituted the imperial authorities even threatened with death whoever was caught “provoking trouble, stealing, and burgling.” Such was the respect for property that inspired the majority of these... revolutionary councils.

The 9th of November 1918 the majority of the socialist SPD took power from Prince Max. Some of the leaders of the independent USPD declared themselves disposed to enter in a coalition government, if the majority of the socialists renounced to the election for a National Assembly, and declared themselves in favor of a social republic, which would pass all the legislative, administrative, and judiciary functions to the workers and soldiers, with the exclusion of the bourgeois elements from the government. The socialists of the SPD answered that they were also for a social republic but as for the rest it was the National Assembly, elected legally, that had to decide. In a word, the Independent Socialists of the USPD wanted a kind of dictatorship, based on the councils, guided by a socialist government, and the majority socialists of the SPD wanted to proceed through parliamentary legality, as they were against a violent revolution.

The Spartacists were still more anti-parliamentary and anti-legality than the independent socialists of the USPD, whose left in its majority worked and agitated united with them. We have to keep this in mind if we want to understand the meaning of the conflict that was to develop in the following months between the socialist majority—that is the Social Democrats—and the various lefts which lasted until the defeat of what was called the “Spartacist Uprising”. This is not exactly correct, as I will show, because in that revolt a fraction of the independent socialists, and the revolutionary committee of the union leaders already mentioned, which was formed by some functionaries of these, had been perhaps more active and decided than the leaders of the Spartacists in wanting and in preparing the revolution.

And in this revolt there were also anarchists and anarcho-

syndicalists, including our anarchist group; as just before the rising a number of Italian anarchists had arrived from Switzerland to join us, who perhaps we were in the wrong... barricade. As in our hope of fighting for the realization of a regime of liberty, perhaps if the Spartacists had won, we were in reality helping them unconsciously, and against our will and aim, in setting up a dictatorial regime, which instead of installing a regime of liberty, would have enslaved us still more. As it is clear that we anarchists being so few, there was very little hope of making our ideas triumph in order to install conditions that would allow us to live without a government. And the result of a triumph on our side—now that we have the experience of so many communists' barbarism—there is no doubt that it would have been a kind of Spartacist-unionist-socialist dictatorship against which we few anarchists would have had no power to oppose. And the communists, at the end, succeeded—through the tricks and murders always practiced by them—in absorbing all power for themselves, as they have always succeeded in doing when they carried out their united fronts with other parties. And we anarchists would have been impotent to stop them, we at that time knowing nothing of what was going on in Russia under their domination.

The danger of this dictatorship of the left was precisely that accusation that the majority socialists in power were throwing at us. Perhaps we have to confess that they saw the future more clearly than we who were mixed up with the Spartacists, and the other supposed revolutionaries, in spite of the fact that they demonstrated themselves to be such cowards and traitors? These are the questions that we can't avoid asking ourselves if we are not afraid of the truth. They are hard things to confess to one's self. They are errors that many anarchists are committing right now in associating with the communists in agitations and social conflicts. And these comrades don't have the excuse of ignorance about the reactionary and bloodthirsty character of communism as it was in our case toward the end of 1918. Today the counterrevolutionary actions of the communists are well known by every-

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one who wants to be informed. Then we were ignorant of everything about them for lack of communication with Russia. So much duplicity and barbarism in them we could not even have dreamed of.

The 10th of December 1918, the leaders of the SPD and USPD agreed to form what they decided to call the Council of the Commissary of the People. It was composed of six Marxist members: Friedrich Ebert, Philip Scheidemann, and Otto Landberg, for the SPD, and Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittmann, and Emil Barth of the USPD. Other members of the Center and of the Liberals occupied the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of War, and of the Interior. The program of this government of "Commissars" was to suppress the State of Siege, give amnesty, eliminate censorship, assure the right of meeting, of speech, of religion, and the restoration of the laws for the protection of the working people suppressed during the war. All legal things. Not one word about the expropriation of capitalist property or the abolition of capitalism.

Meanwhile in opposition to this government of "Commissars", and under the tutelage of Spartacists and other revolutionary elements, mass action was developing. General strikes, fraternization among workers and soldiers. In the demonstrations and meetings sometimes as many men in uniform could be seen as workers, the army being in full demobilization.

The ex-soldiers were too poor to be able to buy for themselves a civilian suit. The fatherland, to compensate them for their sacrifices in war was so generous as to let them keep as a present the uniform of soldiers or the government would not dare to ask it back.

I will repeat that in the general picture of the various currents in action, and often in conflict, there was also the group of functionaries of the unions with their secret committee, which had the pretension of directing the revolution, and from which the masses were excluded. Their intention was to use the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils to form a second temporary government in opposition to that of the

“Commissars”. Therefore these unionist leaders of the RO (*Revolutionäre Obleute*) called to a meeting in Berlin the most revolutionary of these Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils, to be held in the Reichstag. But the socialists in the government got alarmed and for fear they called a counter-meeting in Berlin to which came 3,000 delegates of the Councils favorable to them. In that meeting the majority socialists announced that they had succeeded in forming a cabinet in coalition with the independent socialists of the USPD. The other meeting organized by the *Revolutionäre Obleute* failed in its attempt of forming a provisional government, as it also failed to form an Executive Council to control the government of coalition. This happened November 10. The Executive Council of Great Berlin, under the influence of leftist elements wanted to take over the authority of governing the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils in the whole of Germany, with the intention of establishing a kind of power of their own in opposition to the power of the government. They didn’t succeed because in general in the Councils the socialists of the SPD had the absolute majority.

Rosa Luxemburg considered the revolution of November only the beginning of the social revolution. It had only eliminated the monarchy, she stated, not the capitalist class. Liebknecht also considered that the November revolution had only destroyed the old autocratic machine of the State. Both of them were saying now that what was needed was a proletarian revolution.

By “proletarian revolution” they meant, naturally, the capture of power by the Spartacists, both of them not living long enough to demonstrate what it would be under them. They accepted a dictatorship of the Councils in the style of the Bolsheviks, but we now know that what the communists—with their language of double meanings—meant by “soviet” and “proletarians” is what they did with them in Russia. They destroyed them, and replaced them with the dictatorship of their leaders, and the servitude of the “proletarians”. Would Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht have done the same in Germany if they had survived and won, unfortunately also with our help, we want-

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ing freedom?

On the 9th of November some armed Spartacists occupied the printing shop of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*. With Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg as editors, the 10th of November 1918 they changed it into *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag), as the Spartacist daily. It published these requests:

- 1) Disarm all the policemen, officers, and soldiers who don't accept the new order of arming the people.
- 2) Transfer of all military and civil departments to the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.
- 3) Transfer of all weapons and all armament factories to the same.
- 4) Transfer of all transportations under the control of the same.
- 5) Abolition of military justice.
- 6) Abolition of the Reichstag and of all the parliaments of the various States, and the government in the hands of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.
- 7) Abolition of all the dynasties, and the States of the German Federation. Our motto is: A United German Republic.
- 8) Immediate recall of the Russian ambassador. (The Russian ambassador A.A. Joffe had been expelled the 5th of November because he was accused of spreading Bolshevik propaganda, and giving money to the USPD, and naturally, to the Spartacists. A year later Joffe committed suicide because of the turn that the revolution had taken under Stalin.)

The Spartacists also rejected the collaboration with the “socialist traitors”, and they were against the National Constituent Assembly, accusing it of doing nothing to destroy the bourgeois regime. The Spartacists were entirely for the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, because as they were a small minority of the working people, they hoped to use them to take power. The same as the Bolsheviks did in Russia. But except for a few places, the councils were very little revolutionary. Only in Bavaria, Silesia and Hanover did they expropriate some landed estates.

The occupation of the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* did not last long. The 12th of November, that is, the third day of the occupation, the workers on the paper started a strike refusing to publish *Die Rote Fahne*. But the Spartacist paper came out regularly the 18th of November. In an article, “The National Assembly” Rosa Luxemburg said: “The civil war is only another name for social revolution. The problem today is not: democracy or dictatorship... but bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy... The dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean bombs, revolts, risings, and anarchy, as the mouthpiece of the capitalist system of profit maliciously falsifies. The parliamentary cretinism was a weakness yesterday; today it is ambiguity; tomorrow it will be betrayal.”

This antiparliamentarism was vigorously fought by the socialists of the SPD who wanted general elections, in order that afterwards the parliament would prepare the new national constitution. So the conflict between “right” and “left” wings of the Marxist parties, the first supported by the SPD, and the second by the *Spartakusbund* and a part of the USPD was becoming clearer. Either a National Assembly or a system of Councils. These would be the two “governments” which the antagonists wanted to direct the destiny of the German nation. They were two antagonistic conceptions of what the “revolution” and its aim had to be... Consolidation of the “social” republic after having destroyed the monarchy, or continuation of the revolution to the destruction of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of power by the “proletariat”.

Many of the working people hoped that the coalition government would begin to nationalize industry and services. But the government decided only to elect a commission to study the problem of control. It wanted to proceed gradually by selected industries. The old imperial bureaucracy had remained in its place, and it constituted the same reactionary element. The masters accepted workers’ representation, but nothing else. The high hierarchy of the army was not dissolved and the government continued to count on its support,

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although in Berlin there were many armed soldiers and workers in the *Republikanischer Soldaten Wehr*, who had been organized for the defense of the government. But the government trusted these defenders very little, while it put its trust in the old military gang. The other factions also had their armed units who fought for supremacy for themselves. The Spartacists organized the National Association of Deserters, while Emil Eichhorn, an independent socialist who had been elected Chief of the Berlin Police, formed the *Sicherheitswehr*. Other irregular forces were the 3,000 armed sailors of Kiel and Cuxhaven, the first who initiated the revolution of November against their officers.

As can be seen, by the month of December of 1918 Berlin was a real armed camp, with protagonists ready to grab each other by the throat in order to gain power in one way or another, some for the preservation of the social bourgeois republic, and others to destroy it. Without knowing exactly what would substitute for it, from the moment that the factions who fought for power, and were ready to destroy each other for it, had different ideas about what to substitute for it. And the anarchists, although we felt impotent, wanted something different from what the Spartacists wanted, and the other factions near them, who later on ended by founding the German Communist Party. I think that too caused us very little pleasure, although at that time we could never have imagined that the totalitarian communists in Russia would slaughter our comrades, and destroy our movement, adopting the methods of the fascist governments. In fact in Moscow they had already done that, and we did not know. At that time we only thought that they were simply brother revolutionists gone astray in the idolatry of the state, who could be cured of their sickness. And instead they ended up betraying the social revolution, and everybody who associated with them. It is for this reason that, believing them sincere revolutionists, we continued to participate with them in the preparation for the revolt, up to the defeat of the Spartacists.

To stand up against us, the government needed the support

of the officer corps, which was the military force that still remained organized. But to give the government their support they made these conditions:

- 1) Convocation of the national assembly.
- 2) Disarming of the population.
- 3) Abolition of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.

It is clear that the high officers of the Imperial Army didn't want the social revolution. Hindenburg, the commander in chief of the Imperial Army defeated in war, was putting pressure on Ebert, the head of the government, to accept these conditions, particularly the disarming of the population, and the abolition of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. He didn't like, either, that the independent socialists were in the government and in the name of the officers he asked for their expulsion, even if they had to do it themselves with force, with the excuse that the Allies refused to deal with the representatives of the Councils. The Councils counterattacked by denying that the Allies refused to deal with them.

It is curious that Rosa Luxemburg, with the trust that she declared she had in the revolutionary spirit of the masses, was afraid that the elections would give the majority to the bourgeoisie. She believed that the masses were still, politically speaking, "immature". She hoped that with intensified propaganda, strikes and demonstrations, these masses could be prepared rapidly for the final collision. Meanwhile Rosa Luxemburg, as well as Liebknecht, were denying that it was their intention to overthrow the government with a putsch.

On December 6, there was a clash between demonstrators and the troops of the government—the *Republikanischer Soldaten Wehr*, which as I said had been organized for its defense. There were about fifty dead and wounded. This demonstration, organized by the Spartacists, came because rumors circulated that the counter-revolution had started. It was not true. Everything served to organize political demonstrations. The chain of demonstrations and strikes was the tactic that the Spartacists and their associates on the left were using to

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train the masses for the revolution, they were saying. But in reality very few of the masses understood the political aim for which they were used. If they would have understood well where their leaders wanted to lead them, perhaps they would not have participated so easily in these demonstrations. Ourselves, we had doubts, although we wanted to go to the end in order to see what would come out of it, revolutionary as we were at all costs.

But this form of chain agitation little by little finished by tiring and disheartening the masses who didn't see the immediate results, while their suffering increased continuously, since the workers could not go to work to earn a living in peace, while the more audacious elements were becoming more daring and wanted more agitation. We had become so impatient that we considered a day wasted if it passed without something sensational, in the revolutionary sense. But it was natural that the masses would get tired and disheartened, because by calling them out continuously in the streets, the factories were being closed, transportation was paralyzed, and misery was increasing. Hunger was getting more general among the people. Something that, as always, was not shared by the leaders. While we proletarians were living on cabbage soup, the leaders continued to eat and drink as always. Fieramonte and I lived entirely on a kind of bread which was said to be made entirely from of potatoes, mixed with bran and sawdust, with the said cabbage soup, which had a lot of water and little cabbage. We never succeeded in killing our hunger. Real hungry revolutionists were we, with empty bellies and full of revolutionary enthusiasm, the same as thousands of others. And at so many years distance, and with a full belly, it seems to me a mystery how we could have so much revolutionary fire in us. And as anarchists, in a sea of authoritarians, with no prospect of victory of our ideas, either. Where did we find the energy? Youth? Faith in our cause?

It is also curious that while we of the masses were becoming more weak for tiredness and hunger, the Spartacists, and the other

leaders with them, were becoming more truculent in their declarations; swearing furthermore that the strikes and demonstrations would increase in intensity until the outbreak of the revolution. The real one, they said. Probably they had not yet skipped a meal, while we were doing that practically every day.

Let's not have illusions. Even in revolutions the leaders eat, and the masses fast. I had seen it even in Russia when I went to Moscow. Because the leaders are those who control the power and the provisions while the masses control nothing, and therefore remain hungry. Those, therefore, who have power in their hands serve themselves first; for the people, for a long time, only the crumbs remain. Cynical to say so? It is the truth! That is the reason why the dictators of all kinds don't want to let the power go. They eat and drink so well in power.

One day in one of those continuous demonstrations that we formed in an enormous columns of perhaps 20 or 30,000 demonstrators, we were walking the streets for hours, tired of shouting: "Down with the government!" "Hurrah for the revolution!" Hunger was shouting in us, too many among the crowd not having a penny to buy something to eat. In passing in front of a bank, I suggested we assault it, take the money, and with it buy food for that exhausted crowd.

"No, no! We can't do that!" the well-fed leaders shouted at me. "It isn't legal! And besides it would be stealing! When we are in government we will take care of that."

So wait, proletarians! Although that money in the bank should belong to you, not to the speculators and exploiters of the working people. But for you, proletarians, to expropriate, according to your leaders, it would be stealing. Only the thieves in the government have the right to rob the bourgeois robbers. The people, if hungry, can die! The government, proletarians, will take care of burying you afterwards.

"The proletarian revolution doesn't need means of terror to realize its objectives; it hates and despises violence and murder. It is

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not the minority, but the action of the masses of millions of people that is called to realize an historical mission,” declared Rosa Luxemburg.

“With an empty belly?” we could have asked her. To realize the mission of the hungry, while the banks are full of money exploited from the people, but the people cannot touch it because it isn’t legal, and only the legal government can do it? It is the mentality of the lovers of government.

Two important events happened toward the middle of December 1918 that in a way cut a little bit the legs off the revolutionaries, and restrained the impulse towards the revolution. The independent socialists were divided into two factions: those who were with the provisional government, and supported a moderate cause, being in favor of elections for a national assembly; and those who called themselves revolutionaries and worked closely with the Spartacists. In one vote in the USPD the first obtained 485 votes, and the revolutionaries wing only 195.

The second important event happened the 18th of December, in which the First Congress of the Councils of the whole of Germany took place in Berlin. Both the Spartacists and allies on one side, as well as the majority of socialists of the SPD asked for the elimination of Ebert, Scheidemann, and Haase, who they considered the center of the counterrevolution.

The Congress demanded the disarmament of all the units that didn’t recognize the authority of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils, the disarmament of all the officers and the White Guard organized by the government; finally, the National Assembly had to be rejected as an attack on the revolution. The Spartacists and their allies were beaten by the majority socialists in a portion of 5 to 1, the socialists receiving 11,400,000 votes, while the independent socialists received 2,300,000 votes. As for the Spartacists, they were so few, that they didn’t even have their candidates. In fact, Rosa Luxemburg and

Karl Liebknecht were not admitted to the congress of the Councils, not even as councilors. Then I saw clearly that the revolutionary spirit of the masses was not as strong as the Spartacists pretended.

The composition of the Congress shows it. The number of delegates with the right to vote was 489. Of these 405 were of workers' councils, and 84 of soldiers' councils so divided: 288 of the socialist majority, 80 of independent socialists, 10 Spartacists, 25 democrats, 11 independent radicals, 25 of a special faction of soldiers, and 50 without affiliation. As can be seen, the number of Spartacist delegates was insignificant. Divided by profession, 195 delegates were functionaries paid by the party, as functionaries of the unions, editors, etc. Of these 164 were of the SPD, 31 of the USPD, 179 workers and clerks, 71 intellectuals who belonged to various political affiliations, 13 active officers of the army, 3 representatives of peasants' organizations, if we consider the miserable number was really almost non-existent. With such a composition of delegates it is not surprising if those who wanted a National Assembly won grandly against those who wanted to substitute it with a system of councils. A vote in favor of elections for a national assembly received 400 votes against 50, a ratio of 8 to 1. With similar voting a delegate of those who lost said that the congress of the councils had committed suicide in favor of the future national assembly.

In the second day of the congress came a delegation from the garrison of Berlin, which included the Naval Division of the people, the force of security of Eichhorn (the chief of police of the USPD) and delegates of the Army of Republican Soldiers, which was the voluntary army formed by the government. The delegation asked the Soldiers' Councils to take the command of all the troops, and of the navy. It also asked them to discharge all the officers. Naturally the corps of officers, still under the command of Hindenburg, refused to obey. A total confusion of claims and counter-claims of conflicting powers.

A bloody incident happened the 24th of December. The sailors of Kiel and Cuxhaven who occupied the imperial Castle consented to

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evacuate it, consenting also to reduce their forces from 3,000 to 600 for a compensation of 80,000 marks. The government and command refused afterward to pay the agreed sum. The sailors then took as hostages the “political commissar” Wels, who was the commandant of the army of the Republican Soldiers, and two other majority socialists. Ebert, who was the head of the government, by means of secret telephone line of direct communication with the supreme command of the troops, invited the command to send troops to deal with the sailors’ pretense of payment, and rescue the hostages. And there came the Division of Fusiliers of the First Cavalry Guard, at the command of the general Leguis. Their attack against the Sailors failed, because to the help of the sailors came armed workers, besides units of the Security Force of Eichhorn, and even part of the Army of Republican Soldiers, supposed to be organized for the defense of the government. Which shows that the government couldn’t trust its soldiers. The sailors were victorious... but then the government, with maneuvers, incorporated them into the the Army of Republican Soldiers, in this way forcing them to evacuate the Imperial Castle occupied by them. And then the forces of the Supreme Command of the army retired outside Berlin, with the intention of getting better organized, and put an end to the rebellion in Berlin.

Another incident happened at Christmas. The member of the Provisional government that belonged to the independent socialists, who although they belonged to the government had not been informed by Ebert of the majority socialists of his secret invitation to the Supreme Command to send troops against the sailors, complained, and asked Ebert and Scheidemann if they approved of what had happened. And besides they wanted to know what the other members of the Council of Commissars wanted to do about the points approved by the Congress of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils. The Council of Commissars approved the action of Ebert, Scheidemann, and Landberg against the sailors. So the three independent socialists resigned, and the places of Haase, Dittman, and Bart were

taken by Noske, Wissel, and Loebe: three more majority socialists. Loebe having declined the place, Noske assumed for the provisional government the affairs of war. But the advantage that the majority socialists won with this move which made them masters of the government, caused the disadvantage that now many independent socialists went left and joined the Spartacists. That is, now, the communists, as at the end of December 1919, the Spartacists decided to create their own party. The *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*—KPD.

On the 29th of December, the funeral of the victims of the attack against the sailors took place. An immense demonstration took place, called by the Spartacists, the independent socialists, and the group of conspiratory officers of the unions. It was the mobilization of forces at the vigil of the revolutionary war. The Spartacists, through the voice of Liebknecht, had put the problem in this way: "All those who were in favor of the elections for a National Assembly, and opposed that the Workers' and Sailors' Councils get transformed into the government of the nation, are working for the counterrevolution." This is, naturally, the sectarian mentality of the communists: Whoever is against me is a counterrevolutionary. Liebknecht, who undoubtedly was sincere and courageous, was already touched by the exclusivist sickness of the communists. Among these "counterrevolutionaries" there was also the moderate fraction of the independent socialists, as they also wanted the National Assembly.

It was from the 30th of December, 1918, to the 1st of January, 1919, that the Spartacists and their allies held their Congress. The radicals of the "left" of Bremen and other cities, counseled by Karl Radek, who had come from Russia, instead of forming their own party, decided to join the *Spartakusbund*. Together they created the KPD—*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*. Of 87 delegates and 16 guests, the majority voted in favor of founding a communist party, although very few of the delegates were real Marxists. And in this way in one single blow the communists absorbed all the revolutionary elements in their agitation. It is the technique or trick that the

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communists use everywhere to grab the power.

Among those that entered in the communist party were also some who called themselves anarchists or anarcho-syndicalists, all Germans naturally. Which demonstrates what confusion certain anarchists and syndicalists, so-called libertarians, were in with respect to the communists of that time, due to their lack of knowledge of what the communists in Russia were doing to our comrades—persecuting them, killing them, and destroying all their activities and organizations all over Russia. Persecutions that the Bolsheviks were using also against the socialists, and whoever opposed their lunacy for grabbing the totalitarian power for themselves alone. Succeeding in doing that because nobody could imagine what kind of vipers we were working with. Because without the power in their hands the Spartacists seemed such honest revolutionaries. Myself and Fieramonte, and other various comrades who had come to join us in Berlin, also could not imagine what kind of traitors we were dealing with. Would they have remained the same, these German commies, if they had succeeded in installing their dictatorship in the name of the proletarians? I wonder! Years later we saw that some of those elements even joined the Nazis in their hatred against their majority socialist competitors, the leaders of the communist party having even the cowardice of recommending to the members of the communist party to denounce to the Gestapo their socialist adversaries.

One curious thing to note about this congress is that, in spite of the fact that Karl Liebknecht and others, who declared that those who approved of the elections for the National Assembly were counter-revolutionaries, in the congress Paul Levi, in the name of the Spartacist leaders, proposed to participate in the elections—this in order that afterwards, from the inside of the National Assembly they would sabotage the same assembly, from the moment that as a small minority they could not hinder the elections, not even with violence. Of this opinion were also Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

A still more curious thing was that the other delegates in the

number of 62 against 23 voted against this proposal of participating in the elections, and against the opinion of the leaders of the Spartacists, now leaders of the Communist Party. Do we have to see in this the influence of the anarchists, and of the libertarian syndicalists?... Undoubtedly the majority of this first congress of the communists had not yet heard of the “democratic centralism” championed by Lenin and other prophets of Marxism. A heresy for which under Stalin they would have paid with their heads. New among the communists, those delegates still didn’t understand the language of double meaning of Lenin and other prophets of the party, now adopted like a propaganda catechism in all the communist parties of the world.

The revolution had to be made by the masses from down up, preached Rosa Luxemburg, not by the leaders from top down, as Lenin preached. Another delegate maintained that the individual localities had to retain the most complete autonomy of their own organizations. Libertarian base, not communist. But then this autonomy was denied by saying that the central office had to assume the ideological direction. In this way the local autonomy went out the window. The same communists were yet ideologically confused, not knowing yet what tactical line to adopt. The absolute dictatorship of their party had not yet entered their heads, and they still groped among contradictions. And if they didn’t know, how could we discover along which totalitarian road they would go? That is why in that moment by going along with them in agitation and actions, we deceived ourselves that we were working in the company of genuine revolutionists. Today we know them through thousands of betrayals and numberless crimes, we know that we were collaborating with future fascist-communists. At that time perhaps they had already the exclusivist instinct, but this exclusivist instinct had not manifested itself in them, perhaps only because they were not yet in power as in Russia.

And in number, how many constituted the just formed Communist Party of Germany? Very few. In all of Germany, only a few thousand members. And in Berlin itself only about fifty. The masses,

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although they participated with them in their demonstrations, were not with them. The overwhelming number, although silent, followed the majority socialists in the government. These were right in saying that they represented the will of the German people. We, in spite of our agitation which was growing in violence, in truth represented a small minority. And it is for this reason that, a few days later, when we took up arms, the masses didn't follow us onto the battlefield, and we found ourselves isolated and abandoned in our struggle. Our idea that we represented the revolutionary will of the German people was pure illusion. And we were defeated.

If the Spartacists and their allies called the majority socialists traitors of the revolution, sold out to the bourgeoisie, they answered with the same invectives, in their daily *Vorwärts*, calling Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg brutal beasts, stranglers of the liberty of expression, and saboteurs of the republican government.

“The Spartacists and their allies have the effrontery of pretending that they are the masters of Berlin,” the majority socialists of the SPD said, “although nine-tenths of the population hate their actions.”

Perhaps they exaggerated, but there was no doubt that the majority was with the SPD or were neutral, and they were just waiting to see on which side the wind would blow. It is the prudence of the masses, that the revolutionaries delight in calling cowardice, but in reality it is the wisdom of the people who don't like adventures in the dark, and at the end come out worse than they were before. Just the contrary of what Marx said, that the masses have only their chains to lose: the masses know better than Karl Marx that they have so few goods and freedom, that they can't allow themselves to lose even that little for revolutionary adventures that in the end revolutionize so little that the result is a change in masters. First bourgeois, afterwards bourgeois-communists. The wisdom of the masses is ignored by the reckless revolutionists.

As the result of the violence of the Spartacists and associated leftists (I repeat this because the leftists were more numerous than the Spartacists, although the Spartacists monopolized the scene in terms of propaganda), the middle class ended by uniting with the socialists of the SPD in the government. They formed the Council of the Citizens of Berlin. Toward the end of December they published together a violent manifesto against the Spartacists. Among other things they said to the people: "Do you want freedom? Then eliminate the scoundrel Liebknecht! Do you want to be hungry? Then listen to Liebknecht! Do you want to become the slave of the Entente? Liebknecht can accommodate you! Hurrah for law and order! Down with the dictatorship of the anarchists!"

As can be seen, the middle class was taking anarchism as disorder and the Spartacists as anarchists. The fact is that a united front of the bourgeoisie, the socialists of the SPD, and the moderate factionalists of the USPD had formed. And besides, the militarists. A formidable front!

The Spartacists had succeeded in ranging everyone against them, and they still hoped to make a social revolution. What dreamers! And since we were working with them, although it is painful to admit it, in looking at the happenings of so many years of the past, it seems that our hopes of a revolution were rather infantile. It is true that the government of Kerensky was liquidated by the minority; but now the adversaries were warned and they would not be surprised so easily. All these enemies of revolutionary change knew that they were facing a mortal danger that wanted to destroy their world, and they were ready to avoid the danger by all means. Even the blood of their enemies.

How had the command of the Berlin police fallen into the hands of the independent socialist Eichhorn who was supporting the Spartacist agitation? The 9th of November, 1918, when the revolution started by the sailors of Kiev reached Berlin, the commander of the

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imperial police communicated to the USPD to send a representative to negotiate the surrender of the police. That's how Eichhorn became the chief of the police, also approved by the councils of workers and soldiers. The 3rd of January, 1919, Eichhorn was commanded to appear at the Prussian Ministry of the Interior. He was accused of refusing to resign, after the members of his party had resigned from the government. He was also accused of being in favor of the left, then accused of putting revolutionary members in important positions in the police. Besides this, he was accused of having 1,500 workers helping the rebellious soldiers at Christmas and also accused of being against the future national constituent. On January 4th, he was dismissed from his post by the minister of the Prussian police, Eugen Ernst. Eichhorn notified his party of what had happened. They notified the Communist Party. The USPD decided to call a demonstration of protest for the 5th of January, which was a Sunday. The communists decided to support them. The two parties, and the conspiratorial group of functionaries of the unions issued a common appeal simultaneously published in *Die Rote Fahne* and in *Die Freiheit*, the daily of the independent socialists. The manifesto said in part:

“Workers! Comrades of the party! Your freedom, your future, the destiny of the revolution is in danger! Down with the despotism of Ebert, Scheidemann, Hirsch and Ernst! Hurrah for international revolutionary socialism!”

And so, Sunday the 5th of January began what has been called the “Spartacist Week.”

Sunday morning, Fieramonte and I were running through the streets of Berlin shouting with all our voices: “*Die Rote Fahne!* *Die Rote Fahne!* Great demonstration in the afternoon at Siegesallee!”

Naturally we were shouting it in German. An enormous crowd invaded the streets, challenging the counterrevolutionary Ebert. Armed groups occupied the *Vorwärts* of the social democrats and other bourgeois papers. The decision to occupy the newspapers must have been

made at the same time that the demonstration was organized. It had to appear as a spontaneous action of the masses, but in reality the intention was to silence the press, although after the defeat the Spartacists and their friends of the common front wanted to claim the opposite.

A lot of the crowd concentrated in the Alexanderplatz, which was the general quarter of the police. From the balcony spoke Eichhorn, Ledebour, Liebknecht, and others. We in the street were waiting for them to issue the appeal for the armed struggle. But the leaders were wavering and we waited in vain for their decision. The leaders succeeded only in agreeing to constitute a Provisional Revolutionary Committee, composed of 53 people. The committee was charged with preparing, directing, and coordinating the struggle for the taking of power. It was... the supreme command of the revolution. Naturally we simple soldiers were kept in the dark of all this. Like in war, the generals don't inform the soldiers why they would be offered as cannon fodder, so the generals of the revolution did not inform us how they intended to sacrifice us. The revolutionary element among the people, after being slaughtered for four years by patriotic lies, now wanted to fight even if it was only to take vengeance on those who had made them suffer so much on the battlefields. And they hoped that the world that would come would always be better than the one that we wanted to destroy.

We, perhaps were among the few who knew what we wanted, although in such a small number we had an entirely different idea of how to obtain that aim. Through a very crooked path they wanted to arrive to their Marxist doctrine. A path based on authority, through which we anarchists think that they will never arrive to a free world, without exploitation of men on the part of other men. And the history of Marxists in power in this 20th century shows us that convincingly.

For January 6, 1919, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee made the first proclamation to the people asking the workers, soldiers and comrades to abandon work and come again at 11 o'clock

a.m:

“To the Siegesallee to fight for the revolutionary power of the proletariat!”

The second proclamation of the same 6th of January, and signed by Ledebour, Liebknecht, and Scholze said only:

“Comrades! Workers! Unite with the action of the Revolutionary Committee.”

That day an attempt was made to occupy the War Ministry, but it failed. The Revolutionary Committee sent three hundred armed men to the War Ministry under the command of a soldier. But they forgot to sign the document that asked for surrender of the ministry. The officer in command said that he would surrender if the document were signed. The sailor in command then left his men in the street in the cold and returned alone to the Revolutionary Committee where Liebknecht and Scholze signed the document, and in that way made it... legal. Meanwhile the Revolutionary Committee had moved from the General Quarter of the police to the Imperial Stables occupied by the sailors, where they thought that they would be safer. But the sailors decided to remain “neutral” in this fight, and asked the Revolutionary Committee to dislodge. In hearing this while leaving the place, the sailor commander—with his signed document—disappeared and became impossible to find for eight days, leaving his three hundred revolutionary warriors waiting for him in the cold. A real comedy. It was with such revolutionaries that the revolution started.

And those were the “commanders”. The sailors didn’t show up again until all the fighting was ended. I’m sorry that I don’t remember the name of this hero.

An army 200,000 volunteers strong, without weapons, assembled in Siegesallee. I remember that day well. Very cold and foggy. We waited impatiently in the street while the Revolutionary Committee, in the warm, discussed interminably what to do. There was a colossal army ready to give battle, but the... generals were missing.

They were discussing while we in the street were freezing. To our coldness also came hunger, and still the generals, comfortably warm, and surely with full bellies, continued to talk. They never stopped talking.

While the generals continued to argue, unable to make a firm decision, and the crowd continued to freeze in the street, a few hundred of those who were determined to fight met in the Alexanderplatz in front of the general quarters of the police, demanding arms. We remained there for a few hours, frozen and hungry, and finally they gave us rifles, and a good number of us went to the *Vorwärts* to reinforce those who had already occupied the daily of the majority socialists. Of Italians we were more than ten, mostly anarchists, with two or three socialists, among them a certain Misiano who in Zürich was the editor of the weekly *Il Lavoratore*, if I recall well.

We were all good friends from Zürich, quite often we formed a small fraternal community of deserters; and in Berlin we wanted to remain together in the fight, because the majority knew very little German. We were such good friends that a couple of weeks before the fight, not having anything special to do, one evening we went all to a public dance where we found mostly girls, beautiful, ugly, like us in need of company because most of their men were either killed in war, or were not yet entirely demobilized. And we, young and also... handsome, humm! fell there like manna from the sky. We each left the dance with a girl, and mine was so good with me that not long after that she saved me from jail by hiding me in her bed for a number of nights. A better place to occupy the time than in a cell.

Finally on the 8th of January the Revolutionary Committee issued its “declaration of war” to the government in these terms: “Workers! Soldiers! Comrades! Demonstrate your power to those scoundrels! Take up arms! Use them against your enemies Evert and Scheidemann! Fight!”

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The day after this heroic appeal to arms, the 9th of January, it seems that the Revolutionary Committee held its inconclusive meeting, in great part having only produced... smoke. We who were already in the fight continued it without their commands.

Therefore from the 6th of January, we Italians were part of the occupation of the *Vorwärts*, which occupied three or four buildings, one behind the other, with yards between them. They were not isolated buildings, but were joined with other buildings not belonging to the paper. They were part way in a street, at the end of a street on one side being a square, of which I remember no more the name. So many years have passed; in 1972, being short of time, I could only visit the district of Neukölln where we lived, which, being in a district of apartments was little touched by the bombs in the two wars.

Alarmed by the way revolutionary things were going, which threatened its existence, the government got frightened. Finding itself in the city without military protection on which it could really count, the SPD, that is the government called on their partisans among the workers to come protect them. During the night between the 5th and 6th January it distributed a manifesto asking their workers to come to the Wilhelmstrasse—where the government was—to save the republic from “the armed bandits of the *Spartakusbund* who for the second time had occupied the *Vorwärts*... Murder and a bloody war and a Spartacist dictatorship is their aim.

“A mortal danger threatens the German people! Workers! Citizens! Soldiers! Come in mass. Protect your liberty, your rights, and the property of your Party.”

To this appeal tens of thousands of workers assembled in front of the seat of government. Scheidemann spoke to them. He promised them arms. The “revolution” was threatening to become a fraternal war among workers. On January 6 the government decided to answer the events of the day before, with strong military measures. It needed other troops, more sure than the ones in Berlin.

Colonel Reinhard proposed to use the Fusiliers of Cavalry who had opposed their camp in the vicinity of Berlin, ready to intervene. The government of the SPD thought that it would be wrong to leave the command to a military man. Noske was persuaded to take the command, and he started immediately to organize the counterattack of the government against us. Noske had no faith in the masses. For this reason he thought that the professional soldiers and officers were the best material to crush the revolt.

On the 6th of January the Executive Council of Workers and Soldiers of Berlin approved the dismissal of Eichhorn, the chief of police, who personally was helping the Spartacists. And in this way even the police was controlled by the government. With the coming of the volunteers from all classes, the forces of the government were increasing each day.

On January 8th the government announced that the hour of decision was approaching, and that it would answer force with force.

“Where the Spartacists rule,” the government proclaimed, “personal liberty, free speech, and personal security are suspended, and the supplying of provisions for soldiers and the civil population are interrupted.”

There was some truth in that, due to the continuous agitation, strikes, and demonstrations in the streets. Suppression of freedom of thought was related obviously to the occupation of the newspapers, and the supplying of provisions referred to the fact that our forces were also occupying the railroad stations. And I must say at this point that, at the moment of the clash, the masses, not receiving arms, and also tired and hungry, had disappeared from the streets; and in that way, those of us who really wanted to make the revolution, we were reduced to a few thousand men and some women, all armed with light arms, concentrated and isolated in a few places, paralyzed by immobility, and, it can be said, waiting to be killed by the superior arms of the adversary. While the 5th and 6th of January we were the masters of the streets, now it was the government that dominated them, and

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we were reduced to the defensive; the government enjoyed mobility, being able to concentrate its forces where it wanted without being disturbed by us. Whoever had planned our strategy, militarily speaking, must have been a perfect donkey.

In the *Vorwärts* we must have been three hundred or more, doing nothing, while waiting to be attacked. When I suggested to those who were responsible for the defense to send out a part of us to bring the war to the enemy in the streets while it was still weak and disorganized, and particularly because there inside we were in a trap, they told me that the order was to remain there inside and resist the longest time possible, because it was hoped that the other cities would revolt also, and the government would be finished. But while we were there in arms, the other cities didn't move except for insignificant attacks which brought little help to us. And therefore we in Berlin had to face the government alone.

“The government formed by the majority socialists would not dare to attack the *Vorwärts* and destroy the machines of their own daily,” they also told me.

“You only forget,” I answered them, “that the majority socialists are the government, and they also control the coffers of the state, and perhaps they hope to have the old machines destroyed—with us, naturally, inside—so they can buy new ones at the expense of the government.” My words didn't make any impression, and we continued to remain there inside, doing nothing, in our cage.

Meanwhile on the 8th of January, 1919, the third day of the revolt, the government felt itself strong enough already to recapture the railroad stations one after the other, and the Central Office of the railroad, besides various other buildings that had been occupied by our people. Already the government was on the offensive, not us. On January 10th we in the *Vorwärts* thought that in a few days we would be attacked also. But we all were convinced that, as we were in the middle of the block, the enemy, to conquer us, had to come and attack us, and we would be able to repulse them for quite a number of days,

perhaps weeks, by counterattacking them each time they came.

Now we Italians, for more than a week, had not been able to go to our homes to change linen, and as we were sleeping on the ground most of the time we were all dirty. If we had to resist a long siege the comrades thought that it would be a good thing if we could get clean shirts, etc. in order to change and be able to wash the dirty one. A good idea, but a little late.

We all knew that the siege little by little was closing ever more each day around us by the military forces, but we thought that they needed a few more days of preparation in order to attack and conquer what we figured was a fortress. After all we were a few hundred, and we also had some machine guns, and the enemy could lose hundreds of people before succeeding in penetrating our buildings. That was our reasoning. A very risky business for the enemy. So the comrades decided that one of us had to take the risk of passing through the circle of soldiers, and go to each room in various streets—luckily we were all living in Neukölln—fill up a sack with linen and bring it there before the attack started. The idea seemed good, but I didn't like it when they chose me for such a dangerous enterprise, with the excuse that I could talk myself through the lines of the soldiers.

But they insisted that only I could do it safely without being arrested, as the thing was particularly dangerous because we were informed that the soldiers were stopping and interrogating all those who wanted to pass through their siege, we being already surrounded on all sides. I had to accept.

But to go out could only be attempted during the darkness of the night. Through our street door it could not be done, for as soon as the soldiers surrounding us saw anything moving from our building they immediately started to shoot. They had closed the street on both sides, and posted behind the barricades, they were only about 150 feet from us. And from our windows in order to shoot at them, we had quickly to expose ourselves, shoot, and retreat, each time at the risk of being killed. But we had to risk it in order to give a dem-

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onstration of what was waiting for them, if they attacked.

So how could I go out? I understood that I could only go out from some house in our vicinity, and through the roofs, by passing from house to house with which we were connected, then go down to the street like somebody living there. But the main danger was that the soldiers, at a distance, had also occupied the roofs, and if anything in the darkness moved, they fired. I therefore had to rely on the darkness alone.

Early in the morning when it was still dark I began to slide from the roof of the *Vorwärts* to those of the houses of the vicinity. A very bitter January morning in Berlin, and luckily foggy. This was in my favor. If I was freezing, and could only see a few yards away, so were the soldiers and police who were watching the roofs. Still after passing the first roof I realized that it was a folly to try such a thing. Whoever watched probably only guessed that somebody was moving on the roof, as it was impossible not to make some noise, but they began to shoot from various directions, and I continuing to slide on the pitched roof, which, being a little frosty, was difficult to hold on to and not slide off the few floors' height. And in the confusion the enemies were shooting, as well as the friends.

So when I thought that I had gone far enough away from the *Vorwärts*, in order not to be suspicious in going down to the street, I had to use all my strength against a door on the roof of a house I had reached, to open it. And this made more noise, provoking in that way more shooting. Finally I was inside and safe. But I had to wait there on the steps until all the shooting stopped, the people of the house probably being still in bed. Then at full speed I descended the stairs, so as not to give time to anybody to open the door of their apartment and provoke a scandal. But before going out in the street I waved a white handkerchief. With that I approached the soldiers who blocked the street. I told them that I had to go to work. As I had not come from the *Vorwärts* they let me go without being interrogated, although I had half a dozen work places I could have mentioned, far

from there. They were also too busy laying the siege to give importance to an unarmed individual. But then, noticing that the square nearby during the night had filled up with soldiers, I understood that I had committed a great error in coming out. How could I hope to be able to go back inside afterwards with a sack of linen?... “I’ll think about that when I come back”, I told myself going on my way at full speed toward Neukölln.

Which was quite a distance away. And there were no means of transportation, as everything was paralyzed by a strike. So I had to cover all that distance walking, then go to every house picking up something from each; and then time to tell plenty of lies to the people of the houses in which we lived in order to justify what I was doing, and not raise their suspicions, as I did not know which side they were supporting.

While I was doing this job I could hear the roars of guns, but it wasn’t possible to understand from which direction exactly they were coming. When finally with my little sack of linen I arrived back to the square near the *Vorwärts* it was 11 o’clock. Too late. My comrades did not need their linen anymore. The jailers would give it to them free of charge in jail.

The shooting I heard was coming from the mortars and artillery that preceded the assaults of the soldiers on our “fortress”, shooting against which our fighters could not offer much resistance, as they could not answer with equal weapons. As I had suspected, we had put ourselves in our own trap by closing ourselves in the *Vorwärts*. Armed only with light weapons, and as it was impossible to see exactly where the troops and the artillery were placed, there was very little that the defenders could do against them. They could not even see them coming. Only when the troops had to come out in the open to attack through the entrance door of our building were our defenders able to shoot at them. And that is what they did, repulsing the first attacks. So the others restarted the bombardment, and they assaulted again, soon forcing the defenders to surrender, a girl, a friend of ours, distinguish-

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ing herself in manning a machine gun while repulsing the attackers.

Those that were not killed were made prisoners, including our comrades. Some tried to escape through the roofs, but I was told afterwards that few or none succeeded. They were shot on the roofs. It was lucky that none of our Italian comrades were killed. I had arrived in the square just in time to see them passing in front of me in a long line, prisoners, surrounded by the soldiers. I mixed up among the crowd which, when the shooting stopped, soon assembled in the square, to the comrades passing closely watched by the soldiers being only able to make them a gesture of greeting while pointing to the sack on the ground with the linen I was bringing a little too late. In order not to compromise me they only answered with a smile.

It was the morning of January 11, 1919. The Spartacist revolt was in its agony, and it was dying without much help from the other German cities or from any place else. The general quarters of the police fell between the 11th and the 12th, the majority of the policemen having passed to the government in seeing that the wind was beginning to blow in the other direction. Only a few of them defended the building from the assaults of the troops. It was the end.

It is believed that it was Noske who subdued Berlin. It is not true. When on the 11th of January Noske entered Berlin with 3,000 soldiers, revolutionary Berlin had already been crushed by other troops not led by Noske. Some shooting continued for another couple of days in isolated places, but by the 13th of January this also had ceased. The disaster of the "Spartacist Week" was complete.

The same day of the fall of the *Vorwärts* the police, not finding me either among the dead nor among the prisoners, went where I was living to arrest me. It seemed that they were well informed about our activity, even if Fieramonte and I, having escaped from the police of Mannheim, thought that we were unknown in Berlin... How could we be if for two months we made our living shouting "*Vorwärts*" in the streets? With my luck, when they came I had not returned home. The

family that rented me a room, even if not revolutionary, were with me in sympathy. One of them waited in the streets for hours to prevent me from going near the house because the police was waiting there for me.

I disappeared for a couple of weeks, sleeping in half a dozen places hidden from the police. I even slept with man and wife in one bed, the husband leaving me there with the wife when he had to go to work early. And particularly I found refuge at night in the room of my girl friend, a girl with a great heart, who although she knew nothing about anarchism, wanted to save me at all costs from the claws of the police, even at the risk of ending herself in jail for hiding me. And when I tell you men that women are a treasure, if you are capable of not believing me, too bad for you. It is your loss.

Now that I knew that the police knew me, I had to escape from Berlin. Until I remained there I could be picked up at any time, since I had to hide, and arrests were going on all over. On the 15th of January, changed in appearance a little (having been in jail two times already in Germany, I didn't feel like going in a third time) I went out in the street, and I learned that Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been arrested that morning in the house of a friend of theirs where they were hiding. Then arriving near a canal I saw a mass of people assembled and excitedly discussing that Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht had been assassinated by the troops, and the body of Rosa Luxemburg had been thrown in the canal, from which it would be recovered only four months later. William Peck, in whose house it seems they were hiding, and who had been arrested with them, was freed without having one hair touched, carrying with him a safe conduct of the officer of the soldiers, who it seemed had carried out the assassination of Rosa and Liebknecht. There was suspicion that the troops did not know that they had in their hands two of the most responsible for the revolt, and that it was Peck who denounced them at the price of his life. What did Peck tell the officer? Why was he left free, after they were getting ready to shoot him, and instead at his place they assassinated Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht?

How many died in the Spartacist revolt? 150 or 1,000? It has never been revealed with precision.

So all the Italian comrades who had participated in the Spartacist revolt were in jail and I was left alone and a fugitive. But not for long. After a few days the comrade Mario Mantovani came from Switzerland (now disappeared, luckily from a natural death). He had arrived late for the revolt, but he arrived just in time for a long trip to Russia. The German Spartacists who knew me and knew also my condition advised me to leave Germany. A good idea, but where to go? To France or England, impossible. As allied countries in the war I would have been deported to Italy. And in Switzerland? Not, either. I would have gone to keep company to the hundred or more comrades who were already in jail; although being in Germany for practically the whole year of 1918 I had nothing to do with any infractions of Swiss laws while I was away. But try to make this enter the hard heads of the police, who have so little... trust in the legalism of the anarchists, particularly after they had already lodged me for three months in their reserved and free... hotels for just shouting: "*À bas la guerre!*"

The Spartacist friends who knew me were preoccupied in finding me a way to depart from Germany. Soon they informed me that they hoped to make me leave in a convoy of Russian prisoners being repatriated. I would be like another Russian prisoner, I who didn't know a word of Russian. I informed them that now we two were ready to depart. We'll include him also, they assured me. And in fact a few days later they took us to the railroad station and they added us to the other prisoners being repatriated.

The train was composed exclusively of Russian prisoners. They were under the custody of a Russian, with the list of all the names of the prisoners, including ours, in Russian, which they didn't even bother to tell us. We would not know how to pronounce them anyhow, in Russian. The man responsible for our safety simply told

us not to open our mouths at the border, in case that the Germans would have interrogated us, as the convoy, while we were in Germany, naturally was still watched by the German guards. The Russian would have answered for us, as the war had made us... deaf and mute.

We departed from Berlin as if we were beginning a voyage of liberation, leaving behind us what we thought was bourgeois slavery, and going toward the liberty of the proletarian revolution. However our feeling of exultation was to be short. We did not know what had happened in Russia. Revolutions are not all joy, as we believe in our dreams. Let the authoritarians put their hands on them, and soon revolutions became tragedies for the majority of the people.

The trip from Berlin to Königsberg and then to the temporary frontier nearby of what had been Lithuania—now absorbed by Russian imperialism—passed without incidents. (In order to recognize them I use the names that some of the cities had then. For example Königsberg, which today I think is called Kaliningrad.) At the frontier the Germans gave very little attention to us individually. They counted the number of the beasts and let us pass. They were very little interested in keeping prisoners, particularly Russians who at that time were considered dangerous. They wanted to get rid of them as fast as possible, before they would infect the good German people with the idea of revolution, which they had heard had happened in their country. For sure it was not for humanitarian sentiments that they wanted them to be with their families as soon as possible, but it is a fact that in this they were more humanitarians in the first World War, than the communists in the second World War; as at the end, for years, they held hundreds of thousands of Italian prisoners as slaves, making them die of hunger and fatigue, without even permitting them to notify their families that they were still alive.

In fact the communists under Stalin didn't even treat well their own Russian prisoners in Germany, who Stalin sent to die in his Gulags after their return to Russia. In barbarism the communists are second to nobody. They have beaten the most barbarous bourgeois,

and they continue to this day to beat them.

But at that time we didn't know them, and did not know what they were doing. They had not yet unmasked themselves. Therefore we still thought that they were... brothers in revolution. But that is not how they received Mantovani and myself at the frontier, although we only discovered that later and purely by chance, from Vilna to Moscow as... prisoners, while we didn't even know it. Such is communists' hypocrisy.

And that was the first discovery that we made about the falsity of the communists; I mean about the communist leaders, as we found the masses full of generosity everywhere we came in contact with them, the communist leaders being a special breed of human being who for power lose all humanity. Instead of receiving us as brothers in revolution, as we were entitled to by our past, while feigning friendship toward us, with duplicity they treated us as suspicious enemies, with smiles in front, and daggers in our backs, who had to be watched, perhaps as dangerous elements; although they must have learned by the information supplied by the Russian who took charge of us in Berlin that I had taken part in the Spartacist revolt, besides being a deserter in the capitalists' war. Yet they sent two soldiers to take us to Moscow as prisoners, while making us believe that we were revolutionary guests, the two soldiers coming along only because we didn't know the language. And for that they chose two soldiers who only knew Russian or feigned to know only Russian (perhaps they were policemen dressed as soldiers) while we, although we didn't know Russian, spoke Italian, French and German between the two of us. But let's not anticipate.

At the border we had to leave the German train, and already in territory controlled by the Russians, in the long line of prisoners, us carrying a few personal things, we walked some distance on the snow until we reached Kovno. There they put us in a train until we reached Vilna, where all the Russian prisoners disappeared, including the guide,

leaving us two in the hands of the Russian military officers, to whom, with the information about the other prisoners, the guide gave also our documents, which we never saw again, depriving us of all our personal documentation. The fact is that they brought us to a barrack of soldiers where we remained for seven days, eating what they ate, while waiting to continue on to Moscow, the city we manifested the desire to go to, so that we could participate in the revolution.

The military commander—or perhaps commissar—of that region was a Bolshevik by the name of Petrov, or Petroff. While we waited for the train (there was only one every three or four days, the transportation being disorganized for lack of material), this Petroff had us brought to his office where we went through a long interrogation, which we at that moment took for an interview, not being cunning enough to understand that the aim of the visit was to question us in order to know who we really were, and what we had come to do in Russia. We in good faith and candidness, thinking that we were talking to a revolutionary comrade, although he was a Marxist, spoke to him openly, manifesting to him what we were hoping to find in Russia: A really proletarian revolution, where the people would not be exploited anymore, and would be free. With a smile and vigorously shaking our hands, he said he welcomed us, and we thought that we separated as great friends, even if of different social ideology.

It was not so. Our naiveté in believing to find liberty in Russia would not have pleased him. It must have even seemed to him ridiculous, considering the Marxist-Leninist cynicism in regards to liberty. He must have also understood that we were not easy subjects to maneuver and trick. In a word we must have seemed to him suspicious of being too... subversive, and with perfect hypocrisy he decided to make fun of us... in the name of the revolution, by giving us the impression that we were on fraternal territory, and that at last we were in the country of liberty and free, while deceitfully he considered us prisoners of the Bolshevik government.

And he told us that, since we didn't know the Russian lan-

Russia

guage, to help us in the trip to Moscow he would sent with us two soldiers who would take us there. And we great imbeciles, in our great faith, believed him! We were not used to such duplicity. Our enemy until then had been the bourgeoisie and the policemen. How could we even suspect that at that moment we already had another police regime? The Bolshevik? We had arrived as brothers and they considered us enemies.

That is how the next day we departed for Moscow with two armed... protector angels, perhaps with the order to shoot us if we, innocently, had done something which to them might have seemed suspicious. Prisoners without even knowing it... escaping from the German policemen, and now fallen in the net of those... proletarians of the Bolsheviks. What a gain!

At the station our place on the train was in the... cattle car, in the company of two soldiers and other worker and peasant proletarians. Having noticed that in the train there were also a few passenger cars, we protested and asked why we didn't go to the passenger cars. We discovered afterward that those, due to scarcity, were reserved for the officers, commissars, and functionaries of the new ruling class, while for the proletarians the cattle cars were good enough. But to discuss this with the two soldiers was useless, since they didn't understand us; and then we figured that there in the beasts' car we were among genuine proletarians, and not with the new bourgeoisie. And besides, with two soldiers exclusively at our service taking care of our health and safety we finally felt highly honored in the fatherland of the proletarians.

The trip from Vilna, Minsk to Moscow lasted almost four days. The train, which was going on wood, went at the pace of snails, and once in a while we walked at its side just to take some exercise, under the watchful eyes of the soldiers, sometimes having to slow down in order not to leave the train behind. Then once in a while the train would stop to load wood for the locomotive, and the passengers

would lend a hand in that in order not to lose too much time. And in certain stations the train would stop a few hours, and then the two soldiers would take us to some military post to eat. In order to do this we had to cross the waiting halls full of peasants and workers, perhaps waiting there two or three days for that train, and as soon as it stopped they wanted to rush to the train; but other soldiers would keep them closed in the hall until the train was ready to depart. Meanwhile, Mantovani and I with the two soldiers had to cross the packed hall, and the two soldiers, to open a passage among the crowd of peasants, would hit right and left with the butt of their rifles. We got furious with them for their brutality, naturally in our language, while the soldiers were shouting a word, always the same word, which although we didn't know what it meant, stuck in my head, as it was repeated so many times in each place. The soldiers, to our protest, would make signs to us that they wanted to eat. Which also meant food for us. And that happened in both going and returning, the crowd not being allowed to occupy the train until we were back; naturally some functionary meanwhile boarding the train also while the proletarians waited, probably cursing us all. Curiously without hatred toward us, while the big shots went to occupy the passenger cars, we went with the peasants in the cattle wagons to share the same lice with which the wagons were crawling.

The scene of brutality before reaching Moscow was repeated many times; and while we didn't like what they did to the crowd, which was treated like so many animals, we didn't like the strange and frightened eyes with which the people looked at us while they let us pass either. And that began to raise some doubt in our minds. Why were they looking at us with so much... respect? What kind of guest were we?... Or was it fear?... In the cars if we tried to talk to the people, the soldiers would push them away and not let them talk to us. Meanwhile in approaching Moscow the temperature had gotten very bitter since we were in the beginning of February, and in the cattle wagon we were freezing, as we weren't dressed for Moscow winter. And the

last time we went out to eat, when we came back we went to a passenger car. There were no seats, but like other passengers we stretched out on the floor. And when it got dark everybody tried to get some sleep. The two soldiers were stretched near the door, then came Mantovani, then me. Next was a man with a sack of provisions he had bought from the peasants. The soldiers and Mantovani started to sleep, and since my neighbor didn't, I asked him in a whisper: "Italian or German?" "German," he answered. "I am a Jew." After conversing a while I asked him: "I heard this word many times. What does it mean?" "Prisoners!"

Naturally I received a shock, although I had already started to suspect it. The neighbor went to sleep also, and I woke up Mantovani, communicating to him, in the dialect of Milan, my discovery, and beginning to suspect that those two soldiers were not as stupid as they wanted to appear, and perhaps they were policemen who understood Italian. And so instead of passengers they were conducting us to Moscow as prisoners. And that was very very serious! And yet in observing the great care that they were taking of our... safety we should have suspected it earlier. But we were not used, among anarchists, to such double crossers. We had met the new Jesuits... We really got worried.

We were only two hours from Moscow and we were sure now that they were taking us to the secret police, that is the Cheka, which the Jesuit Lenin had already organized. Why? Our lives depended on that question. In wars and revolutions the life of people is so cheap. And since we didn't have any personal documentation anymore, as they had taken them away from us, there was only our word. And we had to find some means to save our lives. They could take us for counterrevolutionists... spies... anything they wanted...

The image of a Russian woman who had resided in Italy, and particularly in Milan flashed in our minds. We didn't know her personally, but I had seen her a number of times when I was fourteen and fifteen, and working in factories, where she came a number of times at the lunch hour to speak to us of socialism in the street. One of the fin-

est of persons. So if they asked us if we knew somebody in Russia, and knowing that she had returned there after the revolution, although she was not a communist, we decided to say that we knew her.

With a woman so in love with Italy and Italians, somehow we felt that we had some protection. We didn't have any other, besides our word that we were revolutionists. She was Angelica Balabanoff.

We arrived in Moscow after midnight, and before we arrived at the headquarters of the police it was 1 o'clock, with the soldiers closely watching us even more while walking in the street, for fear... of losing us. Moscow was sleeping, and for the first time we came to know Moscow's cold, of which I had already read in so many of their books. The streets seemed covered with a foot of ice, and a few times we fell on the ice unable to keep equilibrium. And being so poorly covered for such a cold, we were shaking like leaves. We had a great desire to find some warm place, even if it was a police bilge. And that is where they took us. And now we knew positively that instead of arriving as guests in the capital of the revolution, we had arrived as prisoners. Revolutionaries that we were outside of their country of the revolution, there we had graduated ourselves as convicts. The arrival of these two authentic proletarians in the fatherland of the proletarians was certainly not triumphal.

After that the soldiers took their leave; we remained in the hands of the policemen.

Our minds were certainly not at peace. Who knew what they would cook up. After all these were the predecessors of what became the infamous Cheka, and it was from these communist inquisitors that came the torturers and liquidators of the murderous Cheka. And it is only natural that we didn't trust any of them, after what had happened in those three or four days since we had arrived in Vilna.

They made us wait quite some time and then they began to interrogate us. They wanted to know who we were and why we had come to Russia. We had to repeat to them the whole story of

our revolutionary life, and explain to them the circumstances and the reasons why we had come. They showed themselves quietly skeptical. After all we were perhaps among the first Italians who had come to Russia after the revolution. Then they asked us if we knew somebody in Russia. That was the moment to play our last card.

“Yes, we have known Balabanoff many years, and we want to see her,” we answered them.

The mention of Balabanoff had a magic effect on those policemen. She was still a great personality in the machinery of the Bolshevik state at that moment. She occupied a prominent place. After the revolution she had rushed back to participate in it, and although she didn't share many of their points of view, and the actions of the Bolsheviks personally, her great idealism still kept her working with them.

The policemen suddenly changed their attitude towards us. From prisoners we became again free citizens, and they told us that we were welcomed to the country of the revolution, and informed us that at that moment Balabanoff was in Ukraine as a commissar, but that in a few days she would be back in Moscow, and we would be notified of her arrival.

We breathed! We were free and it would have been more easy to explain things to Balabanoff, instead of as prisoners. By now it was dawn. They offered us some tea and something to eat, and told us that when it would be day time, they would assign to us a place to sleep. Informed that we didn't have a cent of Russian money, and also a few German marks, they gave us a small roll of rubles so that we could buy food. The new rubles of the Bolsheviks only cost them the price of the paper on which they were printed. They printed them in rolls like the tickets to the movies, but only bigger and thinner. They didn't even waste the time to cut them. When we went to buy something we tore off ourselves one or two or more rubles from the roll. The peasants didn't trust the Bolshevik rubles and preferred the Nikolayevsky, the rubles of the Czar, who they thought would soon be back. They considered the Bolsheviks nothing but adventurers

who soon would disappear. In this they guessed wrong, but they never let themselves be fooled by this new ruling class. And they never collaborated with them, and always tried to sabotage their tyranny in all the forms they could, and they continue to do it.

Because the peasants with their good sense discovered immediately who the betrayers of the people were. They don't let themselves be fooled as easily as the proletarians let themselves be betrayed. About the promises of the political swindlers of the people they don't give a damn. They only trust facts. If land is promised to them, they want it in their hands. They want to be sure that they, not the State, are the owners. Otherwise they won't work. If they have to break their backs in working the land they want to be sure that the fruit of their toil will not go to the hands of the thief, the government, in order to feed the parasites who control it. And the Bolsheviks have never been able to bend them to their will, neither before nor now, in spite of all the violence that the new communist masters used against them. To tell the truth the peasants were better revolutionary material for making revolutions than the workers, in spite of their pretensions of possessing a better revolutionary consciousness. It is not easy to betray the peasants.

In the daytime they took us to a building and there they assigned a room to us. It was bare except for two beds. And it wasn't heated. Imagine the cold inside there, in full winter, in Moscow. They certainly didn't take us to the Hotel Lux, where they brought all the special guests who either belong to the party or they hoped to capture for it. From us they didn't and they couldn't get any benefits for the party. The two beds only had mattresses, and no sheets or blankets. We never got any. Then in order not to freeze at night we both slept in one bed, and put the mattress of the other on top of us for a blanket. It was thanks to that that we escaped becoming two pieces of ice during the night.

And to eat we could only eat where it was cheaper, and gener-

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ally our dinner consisted of cabbage and potatoes with some kind of flour. Meat we never saw. We were living like the people were living who were coming out of a disastrous war and a disastrous revolution, both having displaced the economic life of the country. For this same reason, also, we could not find any work, since there was so little also for the Russians.

But if food was scarce, the... lice were abundant. They kept us occupied, constantly chasing them in the more than two months that we remained in Moscow. In the morning, and every morning, as soon as we dared to remove that mattress that covered us, we started our chase of the lice. It would take us a full hour, since they multiplied during the night. And how they found enough blood in us to fatten themselves so much was a mystery to me. In spite of our ferocious chase we never succeeded in getting rid of them. They were everywhere, not only on us, since there was no soap to wash things, and they promenaded all over our bodies. And sometimes even over our face, to our great embarrassment, if we happened to be talking to somebody. In fact to save us from this embarrassment, we had to invent a special language between Mantovani and myself in order to signal to each other if some of these lodgers showed up on our faces while we were talking to somebody. As soon as the... enemy would show up coming from our heads or our shirts, Mantovani or I would signal the position it was, and we with a nonchalant gesture would dislodge the enemy and send him or her to freeze on the ice of the street. The enemy was torturing us, but we also were pitiless with him. And I don't know if this was a revolutionary battle, also. The fact is that it never ceased in more than two months we remained in Moscow, and I can guarantee the reader that in that daily battle, the enemies of the... revolution destroyed by us alone can be counted in the thousands.

We must have been invaded by them first in the cattle wagon, but it can be said that the lice occupied the whole territory of the fatherland of the proletarians. It wasn't the fault of the proletarians!

That enemy was more tenacious than the bourgeoisie. The lice were prospering on them for lack of clothes to change, and the proletarians were sinking in hunger.

Therefore the lice, like the communists, were reigning like sovereigns on the blood of the poor Russian people so unlucky with their heartless rulers all through their history. Only a new revolution will free them of these pitiless enemies.

As we didn't understand Russian, although we walked in the streets practically all day, it was impossible for us to enter into personal contacts with the people. We didn't understand each other and therefore we could not ask confidentially what they really thought of the revolution. And when we met somebody who spoke French or German—we didn't meet any Italians—they said that they were all communists, or feigned to be so. Therefore it was impossible to draw their real thoughts from them; and we, first remembering the danger we went through at the beginning, could not trust to reveal to anybody that we were not communists but anarchists. We noticed that every time we mentioned anarchists the persons we were speaking to either were hostile or pretended to be, in order not to compromise themselves, probably not trusting us either. It was an equivocal situation which we did not like at all, as we didn't succeed in getting intimate, really, with anybody; and for sure any interest we would have shown for the anarchists probably would have caused us to be thrown in jail. And from the beginning, seeing that we could do nothing independently from the communists for the revolution, we felt disappointed, and began to wish to want to get out of Russia as soon as possible, and by any means, since we could be more active somewhere else for our anarchist ideas.

We began to think that our staying there was a waste of time, in isolation from our environment in Western Europe, to which we were used and where we had our comrades. Our restlessness came also from the fact that here and there we tried to get some precise

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information of where we could find some anarchists, and never succeeded or nobody wanted to inform us, leaving us always in the dark. And since we soon decided that the best for us would be to get out, we didn't even bother to try to learn Russian. When we mentioned the anarchists, in the environment in which we lived being all functionaries of the communist party, they all told us that the anarchists were not revolutionaries, but enemies of the working class, and that they were all working with the "whites". A lie, a hundred percent lie. We knew that it was impossible. But there was nothing we could answer, since we didn't know the facts. We were therefore totally frustrated, and enraged and impotent in ourselves. And after the adventure of the train when they played on us the dirty trick of making us believe that they were treating us as revolutionary guests, when in reality they were holding us as prisoners without having committed any crime in Russia, we didn't believe a word of what they were saying as we knew it was a lie.

The arrival of Balabanoff from the Ukraine opened a new window of hope for us. As soon as they informed us of her arrival we ran to see her. We informed her who we were, and of the adventure that had occurred to us. In hearing the Italian language she received us with open arms as saviors, while she was really the savior. She didn't say so, but we immediately got the feeling that she was quite disappointed by what surrounded her, and of how the revolution was going. Naturally not knowing us intimately, we didn't expect any confessions from her, since she didn't ask us if we were communists or not, and we did not want to confess to her that were anarchists. In such situations everybody is cautious. But she opened up entirely about her love for her life in Italy where she had passed her youth. The way the Bolsheviks were going she must have been convinced already that the revolution was not going toward liberty, and perhaps already was dreaming about going back to Italy, although she was not yet decided to break with the Bolsheviks. Who knows if she was still thinking that her

influence could be beneficial to the revolution? To her we confessed immediately our desire to depart from Russia, due to the fact that we didn't know Russian, and therefore we couldn't take part in any of its activities. She didn't try to change our intentions, and promised that if an opportunity would present itself, she would inform us.

In the following weeks we visited her a few times. She seemed ever more melancholic and disappointed. From the news of the restlessness that existed in Italy we were dreaming together about the possibility of a revolution over there. How many times she told us of the cowardice of Mussolini with whom she had worked on the daily of the socialists, *Avanti!*, before the war, when Mussolini was the editor-in-chief (until he was thrown out for being in favor of the war). And how much we laughed when she told us of certain scenes that passed between her and him. Mussolini had the obsession that they wanted to kill him, so he was continuously afraid that they were plotting against him. Generally she finished her editorial work in the paper early in the evening, and she wanted to go home; but he would beg her to wait for him some time until midnight, when he finished the editorial article. But as a real skunk, he was not the one who would take her home but she, him; and when they arrived at his house he would enter the street door and shut it, leaving her outside in the street to go home alone.

One day in March she let us know that she had tickets for the three of us to go together to the opera. We rushed there, particularly I who am a fanatic of operas, and here I was anxious to see the famous Bolshoi. It was a special performance at which all the foreign delegates who came to Moscow for the foundation of the Third International would be present. The performance was in their honor, certainly not in ours. We two were two anonymous observers of the scene.

When we arrived to pick up Balabanoff at her house, we found her all pale and almost unable to stand on her feet.

“But... what do you have?” we asked her.

“No, no, I feel good,” she answered in a weak voice.

“Like hell you are feeling good!” and we forced her to sit.

“But I tell you that I’m feeling good!” she insisted, trying to get up. With great insistence we made her confess that she didn’t eat all day. In fact, more than one day, and she was hardly able to stand on her feet for hunger.

“But Angelica! You can’t do this!” we shouted at her. “There isn’t much to eat, but you have to put something down in order to stand on your feet.”

“But how do you want me to eat, when the people die of hunger?” she excused herself. Such was the woman. All the commissars and the other leaders were eating like pigs, as it is always the case of all those who are in power, eating and drinking all that they can, giving a damn for the hunger of the people. Their preoccupation was all to consolidate power in their hands. And she like any of them occupying a high position could have eaten all she wanted; but her idealistic conscience didn’t allow her to do it, so she wanted to partake of the suffering of the people.

“You stay here and wait until we return with something to eat. And don’t move.” And we ran out. The place where we ate our daily soup of cabbage was still open. We took one full pot, and some bread, and we rushed back as fast as the ice would allow us without falling. We didn’t want to lose the precious soup. She sat down to that soup like a starving person.

“Now, yes, you are a real proletarian,” we told her, laughing.

“Ah! I feel good now! Let’s go or we’ll be late.” She answered happily. We grabbed her by the arm and we went out in the street, she walking in the middle, as a precaution.

But we had our difficulty in keeping our equilibrium on that ice with our thin soles of our shoes where the water was going in and out. How many times me and Mantovani had ended up lying down on the ice during those weeks in Moscow. But this time she was the one who was falling and we had just the time to grab her and keep

her on her feet.

“Thanks! Thanks!” she shouted at us. “Once more it was Italians who saved my life!”

Perhaps not her life, but having almost twenty-five years on us, and not being too flexible, it is probable that we saved her from breaking some bones that evening. We arrived outside the Bolshoi when it was already full. The atmosphere was festive, like on the great occasions when the bourgeoisie, old or new, displays its power. Balabanoff was pointing out to us all the personages that were present. They were all there in front of us, the comedians or tragic figures of the revolution. The Czar with all the aristocracy had disappeared, and now these characters were occupying and handling the wheels of state, and they were enjoying their boxes. The people, like always, were looking down from the balconies.

Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinovyev, and all the new rulers were showing off. Well guarded by their secret police, naturally. Balabanoff didn't seem to be a part of their clique. They used her world fame in the world of workers, but they kept her aside from their play, like a personage that didn't belong to the comedy; she was rather an annoyance. That night she gained still more in my esteem. She could have practically everything, and she was satisfied with practically nothing. That woman really believed that revolutions have to be made to emancipate the suffering people, not to satisfy the ambitions and the avidity for power of the leaders. What an extra thing it would have been if that night we could have read the future, and had seen that only Lenin would die a natural death, while all the rest would be murdered! And the assassin was right there among them exchanging smiles... and perhaps already planning to exterminate them all, some day, to grab alone the power in his hands, he, the supreme dictator, at that moment their comrade in their plots and crimes against other revolutionists, like the anarchists, and others.

After a few days Balabanoff called us.

“Do you want to depart for Italy?”

“And how! Speak!”

“I warn you that what you have to do to succeed is very dangerous, if you want to attempt it.”

“To get out of here and go to Italy we are ready to try anything. Let’s hear the proposition. We are used to risks.”

“I can propose you as couriers to bring to Italy the documents of the foundation of the Third International which has been concluded. To get out of Russia your trip will be facilitated by all means, but then outside of Russia the risk is all yours, as you know that we are all surrounded, and to go out you have to pass through the lines of those who are at war with us. And they will shoot you if they discover that you are connected with us. You’ll be provided with false documents as Hungarian prisoners returning home, and the rest is all up to you. What do you say?”

“We accept with joy. After all we are only... risking our lives.”

And in Russia we were feeling blocked and in a cage, with no prospect of being able to get out by ourselves, and with no means to move around. If we had tried ourselves to go out we would be suspected everywhere, and if caught by the police anywhere without authorization, they would shoot us, so we might as well try to go out with their help while we were in Russia. We really had no other choice. So we didn’t even hesitate a moment in accepting. The desire to find ourselves back in Italy, even if secretly, due to our status as deserters, was too tempting to resist.

It was the beginning of April when we got on our way. It seemed that the north road, the easiest, was given to other couriers, and to us was given the most dangerous, the south, because there we were forced to cross the Petliura front in the Ukraine. He was fighting a war with the Bolsheviks. By sending couriers in various directions the Bolshevik leaders wanted to be sure that even if some courier was shot, some other will succeed. Nobody told us that, though, and prob-

ably Balabanoff didn't even know that. As if she were our mother, she gave us all kind of advice in order to save us from dangers. Advice that could help us like prayers to Saint Anthony... Luckily of those things we knew much more than she. Just the same she made us feel good.

We had to go to the Ukraine where the Red Army was fighting against the army of Petliura, as I have mentioned, and there try to pass to Bessarabia, then part of Rumania, and then try to cross that nation in order to reach Hungary or Serbia so that we could reach Austria. And then from there we would be traveling as Italian prisoners of Austria returning home after being liberated. (Notice that I use geographical names which existed then, and that today have disappeared, like Bessarabia which has been absorbed by Russia, and Serbia which has become part of Yugoslavia.) If we failed to enter Bessarabia, then we had to risk crossing the front between the Russian Army and that of Petliura. The risk was that the Rumanians, as well as Petliura, if they discovered that we were false prisoners, and that instead we were carriers of Bolshevik documents, we could consider ourselves dead, as they had the bad habit of shooting such couriers on the spot, hating the Bolsheviks to death! And we came quite near being shot. We'll come to that.

The trip between Moscow and Kiev was slow. It lasted four or five days. Even on that line the train was going very slow, having to stop to load wood once in a while for the locomotive. In Tula and in Kursk we had to pass the night changing trains. But this time we didn't have two angel guardians to protect us from... running away. No, we didn't enjoy the privilege of being prisoners... without knowing it. Now at the stations it was only necessary to show the special documents that we were carrying and immediately these people would conduct us to the military command that would take good care of us, by taking us to some private house of some bourgeois who had to lodge us for the night, plus feed us at their table... at their own expense. Which sometimes made us very embarrassed, since as anarchists we were not used to be treated as so many pashas... by fear

of displeasing the new masters who were ordering them to be nice to us... thanks to the special passes we were carrying. What they said we could only guess, nobody having informed us of the exact content, knowing only that the special pass had to serve us only while we were on Russian territory, assuming the identity of returning Hungarian prisoners afterwards. The special passes protected us in Russia, outside of it they would have put us against the wall to be shot. So in a way it gave us a little joy in seeing some bourgeois tremble, for fear of us, instead of being spit on by them.

In Tula we lodged with a doctor. A charming person. During the dinner we had a long discussion with him in German, for the first time hearing some good criticism of what the Bolsheviks were doing in suppressing freedom. He must have understood that although we had to play the comedy, we were not the Bolsheviks' friends. But as we were not sure if he was a real opponent of the Bolsheviks or also playing the comedy just to trap us, we had to put up some semblance of defense of them, by trying to justify certain of their actions by the special circumstances in which they were trying to save the revolution from the reactionary forces that were attacking them. In reality we were grateful to him for opening our eyes some more, since from him we learned more of the truth than we were able to learn in Moscow, surrounded as we were by Bolsheviks. And the doctor, if he were sincere, must have felt that he was not risking anything with us in being candid in his criticism of the Bolsheviks, just as we felt safe in letting him doubt our supposed identity with Bolsheviks. To unbutton himself like that so openly, he must have suspected that for reasons unknown to him we were only playing the part of Bolsheviks. And with what pleasure we would have told him we were only playing the part of Bolsheviks. And with what pleasure we would have told him that we agreed with him in most of his criticisms.

The Russian people, he said, had fought and sacrificed for centuries in order to gain more freedom, and now that the revolution has been made, and the reactionary regime of the Czar has been de-

stroyed, little by little the Bolsheviks are reintroducing the reactionary methods of Czarism, and they are taking away from the people even some of the freedom that they enjoyed under the Czar. Our weak defense of the Bolsheviks at the end must have seemed to him quite lame, and raised plenty of doubt in his mind, because when we thanked him with effusion the next morning for his pleasant hospitality, he embraced us in departing. And we would have liked to tell him the truth, but refrained. We had too much at stake in case that his play was only duplicity. After the experience of our trip up to Moscow how could we trust anybody? But at this distance of time how right he was in his criticism that the Bolsheviks were already showing that in the matter of freedom they were no better than the Czar.

And the truth is that politically and ideologically we were still very innocent. We knew of the heartlessness and falsity of the bourgeois class, but to think that the new communist ruling class would be even worse than the bourgeoisie, at that moment was absolutely impossible for us to imagine. We really thought it was a temporary sickness due to the danger they were in, but once that danger had disappeared their reactionary methods would also disappear. And how wrong we were! There must be something in human nature for men to want power over other men so madly.

And the truth is that power creates tyrants. I am ever more convinced of that. So the problem of liberty must be mostly: never put power over us in the hands of any human being. And if anyone tries to grab it against our will, fight the prospective tyrants to death!

Already in 1918 the Bolsheviks had created the Cheka, an instrument of horror, persecutions, and homicides, that would destroy Russians by the millions, and transform Russia into an immense jail covered by concentration camps, and be superior in torture even to the Czarist Okhrana of infamous memory, which all the Russian revolutionaries who had fought for liberty knew in their bones. But, not knowing the language, we had no knowledge of the barbarities

that this evil organization had already committed.

Even at the beginning of 1919 the Bolsheviks had already in great part sabotaged and destroyed the other parties, which were those that in reality had contributed more than the Bolsheviks in undermining the foundations of Czarism, and in making the revolution. But I who had lived most of 1918 in Germany while the nation was heading towards its collapse, and having also passed three months of 1918 in two different jails, I had only scarce information of what was going on in Russia after the revolution, and that information was from suspicious sources. And then in Berlin being only in contact with Spartacists around the paper, who were communists, all that they said about Russia and the Bolsheviks was in their favor, making themselves pass as the only revolutionaries, while all those who opposed them were called traitors of the revolution. We didn't know the facts to be able to refute them, and also we were not in a situation to be able to discover the truth, even if we had suspected anything, and wanted to find it.

If we had known the truth we would have discovered that the Bolsheviks were already betraying and suppressing the Workers' Soviets, and those of the soldiers and peasants; and that from treason to treason they were already replacing them with their centralized and dictatorial power. But of these maneuvers and treasons we were not in conditions of getting the information, and we didn't even suspect that such treason was taking place.

The Bolsheviks, on the night of April 12 (that is ten months before we were to arrive in Moscow, and while Fieramonte was in jail in Germany) had already bombarded with artillery the anarchist organizations in Moscow, and their policemen and soldiers had assaulted and plundered them. But we two in Moscow were unaware of that, and nobody informed us. Therefore we, with the doctor, put up some defense of the Bolsheviks while ignoring totally what they had already committed against our own comrades, having gained some knowledge of their duplicity only through our own experiences with

them. But this bad experience of ours at the end we came to consider rather accidental, and inclined to laugh it off at that time.

Another stop we made at Kursk where they brought us to pass the night—and to dine in the house of a priest. He lived in a lovely villa, surely built with the contributions of his faithful. But now far away from Moscow and in contact with the (at that time) granary of the Ukraine, the dinner we had with the priest was the best we had since we had entered the country of the revolution. Which shows that even in the most critical moments the priests are always the last to suffer hunger, because they have always the faithful, who perhaps even suffering hunger themselves, always furnish their pastor with the best that God... and the peasants produce. Like a good priest, not knowing who we really were, he was very cautious in what he said about what was going on in Russia. "By God's will, peace will return in the country and hatred will disappear." In reality, with good dinners assured, it is easy to be optimistic on what life will bring tomorrow, no matter in what circumstances you are forced to live in the present. The priest knows that revolutions are transitory, while religion is eternal, under one form or another, exalting the deities of heaven or earth. Man will always need an unattainable heaven, as a dream to reach beyond his daily life.

Besides the good dinner the priest had also a beautiful servant, young and fresh, who was giving us the desire of putting our teeth on her like on a ripe peach. And we were rather starving in that line. Each time that she brought something to the table—when the priest was not looking—she smiled invitingly at us, pressing her body against ours; and we were feeling as if an electrical current was passing through her body. I don't know how I was looking at her, but Mantovani was devouring her with his eyes. I bet I was doing the same. In Moscow willing girls were not lacking, but always half hungry and loaded with lice we had not dared to start flirting. We were afraid to pass our lice on to those good girls. But perhaps our timidity was exaggerated, as in all likelihood the girls, for lack of soap like us,

had their own share of lice to exchange with ours.

The fact is that in Moscow we kept ourselves chaste, in spite of the fact that charming girls in need of romance like ourselves were not lacking, considering that a few million men had perished in the war. And that makes the luck of those who remain. They can enjoy... double ration.

And the revolution, like war, had also contributed to the misery that followed, which had provoked the breaking up of the class bonds—to destroy many of the sexual prejudices; and then the necessity of eating and the necessity to survive in such dangerous circumstances in which human life loses much of its value, and destroys the moral prejudices, pushing thousands of girls to use their beauty and their youth as a means to eat and survive. A thing that at that moment is what counts more than anything else. And the old privileged classes, destroyed, or reduced to no means, classes to which these girls belonged as possessions, or were part of themselves as girls of rich families; to whom do they have to give themselves in order to survive? Naturally to the new privileged class which has taken the place of the old one, by grabbing the power, becoming in this way the one who controls all the means of subsistence, and therefore also the lives of all the population. Particularly if this new class has implanted a dictatorial system from which nothing escapes, nothing can be taken away from it, and therefore possesses all: wealth and human beings.

It is for this that, even in revolutions, the class that has arrived in power becomes possessed by a frenzy of enjoyments: women, wine, feasts, debauchery all along the line, and for any pretext, displays all that they possess, which is the best that the world can offer, while perhaps working people in the name of which they are ruling may be starving. The communist dinners with mountains of the best foods and wines, paid by the State they control, show it, while the people live on bad bread, and even worse meat. I have seen that not long ago in all the communist countries of Europe. And a Balabanoff who doesn't take advantage of her prominent position of command is a rare exception.

After dinner, and at the time to go to bed, the beautiful servant of the seductive smile really seemed to invite. Who knows if we made love like those Russians?.. We were willing to submit ourselves to the test. Mantovani and I slept in a room of two separate beds, perhaps reserved for guests. Once the lights were out, I decided to go... scouting in the darkness in the hope of discovering where the girl's bed was, and see if her smiles were really an invitation for a night of joy. I had seen in which room the priest had retired himself and I directed my steps toward another room where I thought the beauty had hidden herself, taking care not to make any noise, touching here and there delicately in the hope of finding a bed with a lovely warm body inside. In the case that the smiles were empty of substance and surprised by my touch she would have shouted for help, I was ready to play for the priest the comedy of the somnambulist who at night goes around without knowing where he goes... I couldn't discover the girl, and since I could not wander around all night I had to go back to my bed all disappointed.

In the morning, when it got light, and the priest was still in his bed or perhaps had gone to church, I saw Mantovani get up and get out of the room. Where is he going, I wondered. I waited in the bed five minutes, I waited ten minutes and Mantovani wasn't coming back. Where had he gone? Tired of waiting I decided to go to the toilet that was in the yard. In passing the room where I had searched in vain I saw that it was empty, but in a lumber room there was a huge stove of bricks more than two yards high, and almost as wide, as the Russians have, and what did I see? To my surprise I saw Mantovani coming down from the stove, and on top I saw the beautiful girl looking down quite satisfied. It was up there that she slept nice and warm, and it was Mantovani who climbed up there to partake of the joy that the beauty was willing to distribute... Not to me, poor me!

We continued to Kiev. This is a beautiful city, with the Dnieper crossing it. Here the revolution had not yet created the dis-

organization of economic life, with the consequent disorganization of the means of transportation which had brought hunger to the far away places which could not be furnished with food in time. Here it was still abundant. There we were in the heart of that Ukraine which at the time of the Czar, when the farmers were still free and many of them possessed their own land, was the granary of Europe. Black soil, rich, without stone, which needed only work to make it produce abundantly. And to see today, after so many years of communist domination, that Russia still suffers hunger, is a demonstration of the incapacity or parasitism—or both—of this new communist exploiting class which has become the exploiter of the peasants. Everywhere that communism rules, hunger and oppression follow for all the working people.

So food in Kiev was plentiful, the stores and the markets were full of goods to eat. The parasitic State had not yet emptied them. And everything was still cheap compared to Moscow. While we went around the city, since we had some time, we stopped in an open market. There was everything. We filled our bellies with fruit, which we had not tasted for months. In the market a charming girl hearing us speaking in a foreign language that she didn't understand (we were talking in Milan's dialect, which was at that time spoken by everybody, as it was like a language in itself) tried German with us. Seeing that we understood that, she begged us to accompany her to her house nearby. She wanted to ask us a great favor, she said. Always disposed to not let any girl... suffer, we consented to follow her without any further questions. She took us to a well-furnished apartment. It could be guessed that the people living here were not workers. Beautiful furniture, carpets on the brilliant floor, various rooms. It could be seen to be the wealth of the rich class.

We waited. What is she doing?... Is she going to appear... naked? We made ourselves comfortable in soft armchairs, full of anxiety and desire waiting for the mystery to reveal itself. After almost an hour of impatiently waiting she came in. She was still... dressed,

to our great disappointment. However she had in her hand a letter, which, having told her before that we were going to pass through Vienna, she asked us please to deliver it to some relative living there. And she said goodbye to us, without even a... kiss, and not even a coffee to compensate us for the risk of getting shot if found with that letter in our possession, the content of which we didn't even know because it was closed and written in a language which we didn't even know. That girl must have thought that we were tourists and taking a promenade. In a way we had to laugh at the adventure. After waiting all that time we could not tell the girl that what she was asking us to do was foolish, and we made the letter disappear in pieces.

From Kiev to Vinnitsa we had to proceed still more slowly. The transportation was getting harder as we were coming near the front between the Red Army and Petliura's army, which was retreating toward Bukovina. Due to the importance of the documents we were carrying in the double bottom of our wooden box with our clothes, things which were reduced to a minimum of one shirt, drawers, etc. the military commanders were passing us from one commander to the other, sometime continuing by train, where the railroad was still functioning, or in trucks or horse wagons, in company of soldiers or goods for the army. In each place that we stopped it was the army which procured us the place to sleep and to eat, sometime remaining with the soldiers. Due to the recommendations that we were carrying, the military were taking enormous care to help us forward while we were in the territory dominated by them. But now it was a question of passing into territory dominated by the enemy, and there the responsibility of our safety would be all ours, and we had to take all the precautions, and not jump into danger of death like fools. And we knew perfectly well what the risk was.

The military suggested first to avoid passing through the front as the most dangerous, and to try to enter Bessarabia where

at the moment there was still fighting, Bessarabia being still part of Rumania. We continued therefore to Tiraspol, and from there to the river Dniester, which at that time separated Rumanian Bessarabia from the Ukraine. On foot, in company of a dozen other prisoners who were also returning to their countries, which would be Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, or Austria, we began walking over the bridge that crosses the river, advancing slowly while waving our handkerchiefs to make the Rumanian soldiers who were blocking the bridge at the other end understand that we were peaceful people. The soldiers let us advance until we reached the middle of the bridge and then they pointed the machine guns at us, shouting for us to turn back or they would fire! The point was the division between Russia and Rumania. And as we hesitated in turning back and advanced a few more steps, they became still more threatening, showing that they meant business, and we had to turn back, as we had already been informed that they really would shoot, as they had done that already, killing somebody who insisted on going forward.

So the means had failed us, and we were forced to cross the Petliura front. We went back and we stopped in Mogilev and then Kamenetz Podolsk, always under the guidance of the military authorities, who were looking for a place where Petliura would let us pass. Always as prisoners who were trying to return home, to whichever country it might be, with our false documents and our hot baggage. I don't remember if it was in Kamenetz Podolsk or in Mogilev where they told us that not long before Petliura had occupied it, and that before retreating from it there was a pogrom in which 6,000 Jews were killed. This seemed a little exaggerated to us, because the two cities, which were quite small, still seemed full of people—although the Petliura army, deeply anti-semitic, was capable of committing such an atrocity. It had committed pogroms in other places. And our lives would soon be in the hands of these killers, since we had to cross the front one place or another. We had been warned that, once in their hands, anybody who seemed suspicious as a revolutionary was shot on the

spot. They were at war. But we were so decided to leave Russia, that we were disposed to take any risk. And that was the only means that we saw which offered us that opportunity.

While I was going around the city trying to find more precise information about the murder victims of the pogrom, and receiving contradictory answers (a pogrom had happened, and terrible, those were facts), Mantovani went to the military command to obtain information on the ways open to us to continue our trip. We were getting impatient, and wanted to speed up a bit, as the front was only a few miles away. In meeting later, Mantovani seemed to me rather in a good humor.

“You stink of wine,” I told him. “The nose of an abstainer doesn’t go wrong.”

“Yes, we feasted in the name of the revolution,” he answered, not at all sorry. And he explained that at the military command they had organized a magnificent dinner, and when he arrived they were eating and drinking joyously to the health of the revolution, and to their own. He was invited to take part in it, and was forced even to make a little speech exalting the beauties of the revolution, preceded and followed by other speeches exalting the same, each followed by toasts with delicious wine and something else that burned the stomach. And from toast to toast they had all finished in getting drunk, including Mantovani, who was no enemy of alcohol, although in this case he was the accidental... victim.

The elite enjoy the fruit of similar authoritarian “revolutions”, while the masses contribute the sacrifice of their lives. If you study well all these authoritarian “revolutions” you will find, from the beginning, that they stink of counterrevolution; because little by little, with all kinds of tricks and pretexts, the elite snatches from the masses the control of the revolution, and ends up by controlling all the wealth, principally for their own benefit. And the “communist” revolutions offer this tragic example of betrayal of the working people, the treason of the aims and aspirations that serve as pretexts

for starting the revolution.

The next day they brought us toward the front in a camion. Here the line of fire was flexible, and it was running more or less along the Dniester, which was not as large as at Tiraspol. There was a point where the army of Petliura allowed, under strict inspection, the prisoners who repatriated to enter in the territory that they occupied. So after leaving the truck of the Red Army, instead of trying to walk the distance that separated the two fronts on foot, in the company of a few other prisoners we hired the horse wagon of a peasant who for a few rubles offered to carry us to Cernauti, a railroad station occupied by Petliura. And so we left the territory of the Bolsheviks' "revolution" without grave incidents. We were in the territory of "the enemy", but it seemed to us that we were breathing more freely. If they didn't discover who we were, and what we were carrying, we were really on our way to Italy...

In Cernauti the soldiers of Petliura held us in the waiting room in the company of other repatriating prisoners, who like us, by various means and directions, in small groups had come out of Russia. The soldiers told us that we could not leave the room until we had passed the inspection. By the military. That was the great danger! If they discovered what we were carrying in the double bottom of our boxes we were lost. We could consider ourselves shot. And there in front of everybody we could not even open our boxes and see if everything was in order. I was the one who was carrying the box with the double bottom.

While we were waiting for the inspection the soldiers showed to us a train loaded with artillery, guns in open wagons. Petliura's army was in retreat.

"It is on those open wagons, in company of the artillery, that you will have to travel tonight, as there is only one passenger car, and in that travel the officers," they told us. "And if you don't like that, you can go back to Russia." And they laughed.

It was still bitter cold, and we with our light clothes up there in the open while the train was running, we figured we would freeze, and by morning of the next day we would be two pieces of ice. And we didn't like the idea. We suggested to the soldiers that perhaps in the passengers' car there would be some empty seats, and would they allow us to go see the chief of the station, and ask him for the permission to go to the passenger car... if there was some empty room? They let us go out of the waiting room with the order to return immediately for the inspection.

With the chief of the station we remained at least half an hour. First we had to wait until he was free to be able to talk with us, then we had a long discussion with him arguing that we prisoners as human beings had the right to be treated as such, instead of as animals; but he insisted that he could not put prisoners with officers, although in their car there would be some empty room. We didn't succeed in convincing him, perhaps also because he was under strict orders from the officers. But this daring to claim a right which under the circumstances we didn't have, because they didn't even make us pay the ticket to travel on the train a few hours later we discovered that our debate with the chief had saved our lives. Because when we returned to the waiting room the inspection was finished, and nobody searched our boxes, nor did they examine our documents, which they might have discovered were false, and we false prisoners, carrying Bolshevik propaganda papers. Each of these things alone were enough to get us shot, as we well knew.

It was only later on the train that we discovered that if they had looked in my box we were really finished. The trip on the horse wagon without springs and over stones had broken up the paper that covered the double bottom, and the papers we were carrying about the foundation of the Third International were showing up, which included also a couple of hand-written articles by Balabanoff for *Avanti!*, the socialist daily in Milan for which she had been one of the editors (even under Mussolini, as I have already mentioned). And

since we were still in “enemy” territory, after the discovery we had to decide what we had to do with those papers, before we met a second inspection. On top of the the pieces of artillery we could not get out the papers and tear them up and throw them away, because surrounded by other prisoners it would have looked suspicious; nor did we want to get rid of them all, since we didn’t want to be accused of not keeping our accord, this particularly for our thankfulness toward Balabanoff who had helped us get out of Russia. Therefore when in the morning the train stopped in a station, and we were told it would remain for at least three hours, covered by Mantovani in front of me I hid all the papers in my pants with the intention to go out into town, find a hotel room that would permit us to examine them, and decide which papers to save.

But the station was guarded by the soldiers, and to go out the soldier at the door would touch everyone all over the body. How to avoid that? Mantovani went first and stopped to talk to the soldier, asking information about where to go to buy food, and while he was talking I passed around him and the soldier, and then stopped to wait for Mantovani. And the soldier forgot to search my body and we were safe to go to a hotel which was nearby. In the room we closed the window and in the chimney burned all the papers that were not important, and saved only a few sheets which I could hide in my socks. The room was full of smoke, but we left immediately. And after buying some food we went back to our place in the train, feeling safer.

The borders between one nation and the other were still fluid. The Austro-Hungarian empire was breaking up, and each of its parts were forming separate nations, each trying to grab as much territory as it could, while waiting for the peace treaty that would fix the borders for each. With the artillery we didn’t travel much. Only up to the new front that Petliura was forming, and there they made us pass in cattle wagons. These at least were covered, and closed, and with straw on the floor to stretch out and sleep the whole night with-

out freezing. To the credit of Petliura we have to say that after passing the first inspection—which we didn't undergo—they didn't bother us any more. Nobody watched us. At the stops we left the wagons to go buy what we needed to eat. Only to go out of the stations we were searched by the soldiers and we always hid the few sheets of paper we wanted to save in the wagons.

Now we were directed towards Hungary, from where we had to continue to Austria, and Vienna—the capital—since we were supposedly Austrians returning home. Our false documents were good only to that locality. And then it was up to us to find a way to penetrate into Italy without being caught, where a number of years in jail were waiting for me for refusing to become a hero by going to butcher other human beings who I had never seen, nor had ever done me any harm, or menaced to butcher me, I never having done any harm to them. Such is the idiocy of nationalism practiced by both bourgeois and communists in power.

The next day in arriving at the Hungarian border we received one of the most joyful surprises. We were traveling already almost three weeks from our departure from Moscow, and not reading Russian we were deprived of all news of what was happening in Europe and in the world. And in these days a revolution had happened in Hungary and we knew nothing. It was therefore a great surprise and a great joy when in reaching the border we saw it all decorated with red flags. What had happened while we were traveling? Were we dreaming? Those are the flags of the revolution!

And in fact we learned that the revolution had triumphed in Hungary, and the communists were in power, with Bela Kun at the head. And we had arrived just in time to see another revolution at work. We left the train immediately, and as soon as they allowed us, we crossed the border. We were in Hungary, in the center of another revolution, and here we didn't have to hide anymore. As soon as the Hungarians interrogated us we revealed our real identity and the reasons for our trip. Destination: Italy. They promised us all help in

pursuing our trip. Don't look at a geographical map of today because this part of the border is all changed. Then it was still undetermined soil, and Ruthenia was part of Czechoslovakia, while Bucovina was divided between Rumania and Poland. Russia, then, swallowed most of it, as well as they swallowed Bessarabia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia... in the name of national independence.

Russian imperialism is hungry! The Russians swallowed also a good part of Poland, with the consent and help of Hitler, when with him they made the "pact" to divide it together. The part that Hitler took, Germany lost with the defeat in the Second World War, while the part that the communists stole is still being devoured by them, in spite of the story that Poland is a communist "sister". Yes, sister but the territorial property that the Russians took, they kept. And just the same they continue to devour the parts that they took from the other two dear sisters: Czechoslovakia, and Rumania in particular, where before the border of Russia only reached to the mouth of the Dniester, while somenow the Russian communists have pushed their territory to the mouth of the Danube. A beautiful example of modern communist colonialism, among communist sisters. And at the expense of the weaker. More imperialist than this...

And now the next day, for the first time since we left Germany, we traveled in a passenger car, and in it we arrived in Budapest. Here the train, being just inherited from the bourgeois, still ran well. The communists had not yet had time to... disorganize them, like they disorganize everything they touch with their mania of organizing everything from the center. And also to organize from the top down. The communists, really, could be called the perfect disorganizers of our epoch. And the most perfect organizers of mass hunger. Where communism rules, hunger is always present; where they organize, the people always eat little and work a lot. However in organizing plots against those who want to hinder them from grabbing more power, and install their dictatorship, they are champions. This is their art. The art of the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist hypocrites.

In Budapest, informed of the business that we had to carry through, and that they believed important, the communists offered their immediate help to us... since we were risking our lives for them. After all the Third International was important for them, not for us, since it was only serving us to get free from their already slave country, and as a means to go to Italy. For the rest the Third International could go to hell. As anarchists we didn't expect anything good from it.

The first thing that they did was to find a decent place to sleep and the means to get food. In Budapest we had to remain almost a week in transforming ourselves from Austrian prisoners to Italian prisoners of the Austrians returning to Italy, not to Austria this time. So we had to say that we had been made prisoners on the Italian front, instead of the Russian. And so we needed new documents, and naturally not in our name, as jail was waiting for us.

Next day they informed us that the commissar Bela Kun wanted to talk to us to be informed of our trip from Russia, and to give us a commission for Italy. They came to pick us up at the hotel and they brought us to him. In passing through the streets in daytime the life of the people seemed to run still normally. The capture of power had happened suddenly, and people still seemed surprised. Will it last? They seemed to ask.

Bela Kun didn't make any particular impression on us. One of the usual organizers of the party who had succeeded in arriving at the top of power. His intellect wasn't impressive. And now he directed the destiny of the revolution in Hungary, being considered its leader, like Lenin was considered the leader of the Russian revolution. The meeting lasted a long time. He wanted to know everything that we had observed in Russia. Naturally we reserved our particular personal impression about the degeneration toward totalitarianism, which we had noted over there among his comrades and friends in power, with whom he was supposed to be in accord. It would be like washing the head of a donkey to try to convince him that their dictatorship was

the worst of all evils for a revolution. After all he was also a dictator, and all his ideological training was imbued with authoritarian spirit. Ours would have been lost time, and we were carrying the documents of the foundation of the Third International to the socialist *Avanti!* (the communist party had not yet been founded in Italy), to which paper he wanted us also to add 30,000 italian liras they had found in the banks, which they had expropriated, the 30,000 liras being worth about 1,500 dollars. A big sum for 1919. Naturally we accepted, since the risk was the same, and they were helping us with new documents.

In the following few days we spoke with various other commissars. With them we arranged that they should put at our disposal a good cabinet maker. And this time I wanted to design a better and safer wooden box to hide both the documents and the money. I didn't want another kind of valise with double bottom just covered with paper, which almost cost us our lives for the idiocy of the communists in Moscow. We in Moscow at our departure could not discover the bum job that they had done, because they had covered the bottom with paper, and they had assured us that the bottom was solid. Which it wasn't. But obviously they didn't risk anything, and we were playing with our lives. And I didn't want any repetition. And the way I and the cabinet maker worked, to find that the box was hiding something it was necessary to break the box apart. No paper inside. It looked all solid wood; probably it was the first time that a box like that was ever imagined and built. Even if the police or soldiers had looked inside, and were suspicious enough to measure the thickness of the various pieces composing the box, all the pieces looked the same, same color and the same grain of wood all over. When the time came we had to break up the box with the hammer ourselves in order to get the paper and money. And it was innocent-looking since it looked like a poor, ordinary, cheap box for poor prisoners like us, with our dirty clothes and shoes with holes. By now we were convinced that one way or other we would arrive in Italy. If free or

in handcuffs... that was the problem.

We arrived in Vienna without incidents and the first thing we occupied ourselves with was to find out if Italy, which had been at war with Austria, already had some representation in Vienna, which was unofficial. There was, and with our new false papers we presented ourselves as Italian prisoners of Austria asking to be repatriated. We had suffered so much in our imprisonment! And from that moment, in order to open our way we had to transform ourselves into heroic warriors, plus martyrs of the fatherland. And in a way we were, since we had risked our lives as many times as any soldier at the front. And you have to play comedies when you are forced to deal with patriotic folly, and you are forced to live outside the law, as they say. And for the tragedy of humanity the "fatherland", all fatherlands, have taken possession of the whole earth, and there isn't one inch of free land left for the individual who doesn't want any bourgeois or proletarian fatherland, the free individual wanting one single fatherland embracing the whole earth.

What was more interesting for us was to discover that there was a special office that occupied itself especially with the repatriation of prisoners. Just what we wanted. The only difficulty and danger was that of passing as real prisoners without raising any suspicion, otherwise as soon as we would enter Italy we would be arrested. We visited the place immediately, and there were informed that they were preparing a special train exclusively for Italian prisoners, and we had only to wait a few days until it was completed. We were more than willing to wait, particularly that the trip would be at the expense of the fatherland this time, not like when we escaped from Italy and we had to pay the involuntary trip out of our own pockets, although it was the fatherland, to which we had given so much sweat, that was forcing us to depart—ungrateful!—or give her our skin.

Although Vienna was feeling the effects of the war, and besides, that of the defeat, the city was still magnificent to pass a few days in. The Viennese cafés were half-empty, and they had a rather sad aura,

still during the day it was possible to enter them and stay there a long time to read a variety of newspapers free of charge, or remain there the whole evening listening to an orchestra playing the most beautiful pieces of music... for a song. Considering what we had gone through for so many months, and particularly the sad life of Bolshevik Russia, followed by the hazards of a trip full of dangers, one of those evenings in the café, while we were listening to the music of a little orchestra, to us it was quite romantic. To contribute to this romantic spirit were also two beautiful girls sitting at a table near us with their "mama", as we heard them say, who often were covering us with their inviting smiles... The attraction was too strong to resist, after so many weeks of sexual fasting, so we invited them to come to our table to take coffee with us. They and their "mama" were gracious enough to accept our invitation, and from that moment the environment became still more romantic, and loaded with electricity...

A little later the dear mama said that, due to her age, she was feeling tired, recommending to her daughters to be good girls, and not go home too late. "For sure, in the company of these two youths who seemed real gentlemen you are not running into any danger," she added. A little later the girls told us that for them also it was time to go home, because they didn't want to make their dear mama worry. Were we so kind to accompany them, to save them all the dangers on the way home? Naturally we as gentlemen could not refuse, even if the dangers of the street would have put our precious lives in danger. And so we took, slowly, a beautiful walk under the beautiful starry sky of Vienna, in an evening in which could be felt the fragrance of spring.

Arriving at the door of their house, we told them that it would break our hearts to leave them so soon, and would they allow us the happiness to take them up to their room, to make sure that they would be safely under the cover... naked, if possible, and we feeling quite sad, all alone, so far away from our mothers?... The grace was granted to us to help to cure us from the sadness, but they recommended to us not to make any noise in climbing the stairs and in en-

tering the apartment, because they didn't want to wake their mother, who for sure was already asleep. We entered the apartment on tiptoes, and taking us by the hands they led us to their room, in total darkness.

Ah! What a romantic adventure, we were saying to ourselves, while we were entering such a sanctuary of love! We have conquered two, ah! virgins!

The room had a big bed in which those two treasures slept. There was also room for four. "Let's not turn on the light," they whispered to us, "otherwise our dear mama would discover that we have returned, and if she sees that we have let you up she will scream at us." "Don't move around, don't touch anything. It is better that we hide under the covers, as in this way we would not make any noise." "Take off your shoes. Take off also all your clothes and enter naked under the covers... like we do... not to dirty them, otherwise tomorrow morning our mother will discover that we have hidden you in our bed..."

We obeyed! We did not want to oppose such good advice. Naked like the day we were born we entered the bed, the two virgins knowing better the topography of the room being already in it in Eve's costume in the garden of Eden, both of them in the middle of us, Mantovani on the side near the window, and me on the other side toward the door leading to the other room. Being so dark in the room, and still more under the covers, I cannot tell you... what happened, with such beauties in our arms. Therefore don't expect from me a detailed description... I only know that the light in our head only came back later on when we realized the horror of our action in taking advantage of the innocence of those two dear girls, while they were not under the strict vigilance and tender care of their dear mother. We felt so guilty! Perhaps also due to the fact that the initial ardors had somewhat dissipated under the assaults to our reserves of energy on the part of those divine girls... What unexpected joys! What conquerors of virgins we were!...

Once I recovered all my senses, and reestablished the balance

of my system, I began to look around, always holding the treasure in my arms. And getting a little used to the darkness, I began to distinguish things around us. One of the things that I saw gave me a shock, but I restrained myself in order that the girl should not understand what I saw. The curtain covering the door near me opened slowly, and a naked arm silently advanced toward me... I could not distinguish well... "What is it?" I asked myself... "A dagger?..." They wanted to assassinate us? No!... Just rob us?... Not even that!... The curtain opened a little more and I recognized the face of the good mother... What was she doing?... She was pushing slowly under the bed... a basin full of water, with great care not to make any noise in order not to disturb the placid sleep of her two darling daughters. She had so much care of their... hygiene! Then she retired, perhaps to go to resume her sleep, now tranquil in knowing that her good daughters were running no danger... being well protected by two... gentlemen like us.

Naturally, in observing that scene, all my illusions of an amorous conquest vanished instantly! I felt like laughing for the really artistic way they snared us like amateur Don Giovannis. It was really amusing, to think of it! In whispers and in Milanese dialect to make sure that the two lovely girls (who were still industriously working to make our evening as pleasurable as possible) would not understand, I revealed the magnificent comedy to Mantovani, who didn't believe it. After all we had to give them credit for their good will. They didn't spare anything! They were real artists! Then I whispered to Mantovani that their art had to be compensated.

"But will they not get offended?" answered he, not ready yet to abandon his dream of an amorous conquest.

"They will get offended if we don't recognize with generosity all the value of their art!" I answered him, laughing under the covers.

It was time to depart. The two girls took us down to the street. In a sign of gratitude for having helped us so well in defeating our melancholy, we wanted to put some money in their hands. With

great shyness they refused it, insisting that all what they did they had done for the... tremendous attraction of our... beauty. They wanted to continue the beautiful comedy to the very end. We were grateful to them, but we insisted, and forced them to take the money... because we also wanted to demonstrate to them our immense gratitude for their good heart in helping to make our sadness dwindle... and also to thank their dear mother for having put in the world two treasures like them...

Ah! If that was our feeling then they were taking the money. Not for themselves, but for their dear mother who they loved so much.

We kissed them and wished them good night, going to the hotel as happy as birds. It was worthwhile to be so teased! The following evening Mantovani was still not convinced that it had not been a real and unique romance. To convince him we passed in front of the same café, and there were the two "daughters" sitting at the same table with their "mama" waiting for two other birds like us, out to conquer... virgins.

Finally we left Vienna in the company of many other repatriating prisoners in a special train reserved exclusively for us. A representative of Italy was in charge to take care of all our needs during the trip, and at the border to deliver us to the Italian military authorities who would dispose of us. In Innsbruck we arrived early on a Sunday morning. The train had to stop for a few hours. So the guide, who was a man of devotion, asked the prisoners if any of us wanted to go to the Mass. As we wanted to see the city, and particularly because we wanted to put ourselves under his protection, figuring that at the border he could save us from troubles if he thought us good Christians (Ah! How many masks we have to use to survive, when we challenge the crushing machine of the State) like himself, we manifested immediately our enthusiasm for going to the Mass with him. Even... two, if he wanted. In the church we joined with him in singing to the saints, like the Virgin Mary and Jesus. But as we had forgotten

the prayers of our childhood, we had to invent them and sing them in dialect, as we were sure that he didn't understand it. And he, not understanding our... Latin, was looking at us with great curiosity. We made him understand, that it was our special way of praying, making him understand that any prayer, no matter in which language, God understood them all.

At the border, all our documents, good or false, being in his possession, he made us pass without being interrogated. And we were in Italy. We continued immediately to Bolzano, just to be away from the border as fast as we could, as the further we were, the safer for us, now that we were no more in possession of our false papers, and that soon the military authorities would discover that those names didn't exist, and that would put them on our trail. And besides we didn't want them to take us to Milan free of charge as military, because they might insist to take us to our regiment, which we didn't even know if it existed, where it was, putting us in danger to be arrested right there.

But once in Bolzano we discovered that we didn't have enough money to buy the tickets for Milan. We had some Austrian money, but it was Sunday and the banks were all closed, and as we considered it dangerous to go to any hotel, because we knew that if the police might show up and ask for our papers, and we didn't have any, and even if we still had them the police might have discovered that they were phony.

So since nobody wanted to change our Austrian money, we tried an audacious game, since we absolutely had to get out of those carabinieri barracks, and told them that we were returning prisoners just arrived from Vienna, and that now we didn't have enough Italian liras to buy the tickets to reach Milan with the following train; and if they discovered that we were no longer with the other prisoners we would be in trouble. But since the banks were closed, it was their duty to help us, by changing our Austrian money into liras. But the carabinieri refused to give us their liras in exchange for the Austrian money. Then we had to pretend to get furious like real heroes, accus-

ing them that while the war lasted they were in the rear, safely, while we were there on the front risking our lives to save the fatherland. And then we had to suffer as prisoners also... We accused them of so many things that, in order to get free of us (perhaps they thought also that the war and all its sufferings had made us a little crazy) they gave us enough liras, in exchange for the Austrian, to be able to arrive in Milan.

We arrived there when it was already night. To make sure that at the station the police wouldn't recognize us, we left the train a station early and arrived in Milan by other means, and with us the box of the 30,000 liras and the documents of the foundation of the Third International. Our presence in Milan being unknown to the police, we considered that it was safer to pass the first night with our families, and afterwards we would look for a safer place.

The next day, before going to the socialist newspaper to deliver the documents and the 30,000 liras, we consulted some of the most intimate comrades in order to get their opinion about the money. Did they consider it better to give the money to our movement, since the risks had been all ours, or to the socialists? After all it was us, the anarchists, who succeeded in carrying it safely to Italy. Why then did we have to give it to the socialists who had not risked anything, particularly as the socialists were rich, while we were so poor in our movement? And besides, that money didn't belong to the Italian socialists, more than it belonged to the anarchists, because it was the Hungarian communists who had expropriated it from the bourgeoisie, who had stolen it by exploiting the workers. As a right, then, it belonged as much to the anarchists as to the socialists. Perhaps we could divide it half and half...

Then came the question of the honesty and the honor of the movement, and besides of our word given. If we had appropriated the 30,000 liras or even half we would have been accused of robbing the money from them, from the moment that the Hungarian Marxists in

Italy Switzerland Germany France

power had given the liras to us, even if the risk of bringing it to Italy had been ours. We would not have kept our word, and the anarchist word is sacred. Mantovani and I were not convinced, but the majority of the comrades decided that we had to deliver it all to *Avanti!* for the honor of the movement. To the anarchists remained the honor, and to the socialists went the liras.

That same day we gave the 30,000 liras to *Avanti!*, with all the documents of the Third International. *Avanti!* was honest enough to publish that it had received 30,000 liras from Hungary, and that two anarchists had brought the money to them. With a lot of thanks as a reward for our risk, and also for our honesty. After all this is what is done, even when someone delivers something which somebody has lost. The honor of the movement was safe, but the pockets of the anarchists remained empty, while those of the socialists who had not moved a finger got everything. So dumb anarchists risk jail and life, to give joy to those who then we used to call our... cousins. What has remained of our... family relationship?

After a short time Mantovani decided to return to Hungary, while I, in spite of myself, had to give up the idea of keeping him company in the trip. He was only a defaulter to the military service, while I was a deserter and if caught the penalty was much more severe. We found also that the easy way was through Switzerland, and there they didn't even know he was missing. And so he departed alone for Hungary and he arrived there just in time to help some commissars escape after their Red Army was defeated by Horthy, who assumed the power that the communists had to abandon and run, some to Russia, like Bela Kun, to be liquidated by Stalin some years later, and some to other countries; Mantovani arriving in Italy again with a commissar. Naturally, both illegally. And so the commissar escaped, not forgetting to help his comrade commissars first empty the coffers of the State; and the proletarians who helped them to power remaining with empty pockets and empty stomachs, to pay the price of their errors,

and perhaps crimes. It is always this that happens when an authoritarian “revolution” is defeated.

I remained in hiding in Italy all summer. Before escaping again I had the pleasure of embracing Ghezzi, who, with more than one hundred anarchists, accused like him, had been acquitted at the so-called “Trial of the Bombs” of Zurich because they were innocent. The Swiss government even paid them a compensation for the time that they were held unjustly in jail. I decided to pass through the mountains again and enter Switzerland, but this time only to pass through on my way to Berlin. I wanted to know what had happened to the comrades who had been made prisoners in the *Vorwärts* after the defeat of the Spartacist revolt, of whom I had not succeeded in getting precise news in all those months. While in Milan, besides meeting many other comrades, I passed some evenings in the company of Filippi, who I had introduced into the movement when he was not yet fifteen, as I have already mentioned. He was a boy of great intelligence, and of great courage, but very little prudence, due to his great enthusiasm for action. One evening, in the presence of other comrades, he said that he was doing experiments with dynamite, following the instructions of a then-famous pamphlet by a pretended expert (afterwards, a real expert said that it was mostly wrong). Knowing the little prudence he had, I advised him to let alone the dynamite, because that was not a thing for dilettantes, nor was it a toy to play with.

But Filippi was not a comrade to listen to such advice. The day after I arrived in Zurich I read in the newspaper that he had been killed by a bomb that he had tried to place near a bourgeois café in the Galleria in the Piazza del Duomo. I was tremendously shocked! The movement had lost one of the great promising comrades for the future. His great enthusiasm and his great desire to protest against the social injustices had killed him in the flower of youth.

I arrived in Berlin a few days later, eight months after I had

left it. This time the frontier was less guarded, and guided by experience I didn't get arrested like the first time. The Italian comrades made prisoners in the *Vorwärts* had been condemned to only eight months of jail for having participated in an armed revolt against the government. All the other prisoners received about the same conviction. We have to admit that if the regime of Scheidemann, Noske, and Ebert had been brutal in repressing the revolt, it had been mild instead in condemning the participants who had been made prisoners after the defeat. Let's remember the extermination of the communards after the defeat by the hand of Thiers in Paris. About 30,000 had been shot by him, and about 30,000 had been assassinated by the communists in Hungary. And those who were not shot got many years in jail. And the jail was a hell!

When I arrived in Berlin I arrived in time to greet our comrades coming out of jail. Then some of them remained in Berlin, and others left for other directions, some to go near Italy in the hope of a revolution there. I remained all winter in Berlin. Then me and another comrade who in Italy before deserting was working on the railroad, decided to go to Paris where I remained, and he returned clandestinely to Italy.

In Berlin, as during the preparation for the Spartacist revolt, work was difficult to find. In order not to go hungry it was necessary to grab any job that came along. The other comrades had got various jobs, enough to make a living, and I not finding any work as a turner, nor any other that I liked, I became... professor of languages. In the paper one day I read that the Berlitz school of languages was seeking a professor to teach Italian, and, being hungry, to give myself the air of an older professor, I shaved all my hair, and had the effrontery of presenting myself as a professor. So many things we are forced to play in life in order not to starve in a capitalist society. And think what a... sacrifice it had been for me to sacrifice my beautiful long hair without even the security of getting a job. After all it was the only beautiful piece of

property I possessed. And imagine also my audacity to present myself as a... professor, I who had stopped going to school at the ripe age of... nine in order to go to work to earn my living; which I did ever since. And this is the life that the people must live, who are without a country, who had to abandon the natural environment in which they grew up. If we want to live independently we have to be ready to do anything. I have had to do dozens of different jobs in my life.

And when I presented myself at the Berlitz School (with my shaved head), there were half a dozen other people waiting already to be interviewed for the same job. Separately we had to submit to a test, and the test was to give a half an hour lesson, in Italian, to the chief of the school, by using their method, which we had half an hour to study. Luckily in Milan before deserting I took just two lessons of French, and I had a vague idea of it. Still with half a dozen competitors—and some of them looking like real teachers—I lost all hope of getting the job. But to my great surprise I did. Why? I would have liked to ask the head of the school when I was working there, but I never dared. Perhaps it was my coolness when I took the test, since I had lost all hope of succeeding, and didn't care?

The fact is that I taught as a professor for six months and during that time I never could have been more than one or two lessons ahead of the students; and in the seven or eight classes I was giving each day, some of the students were *real* professors. What saved me from being unmasked was the rule that in the class it was *absolutely forbidden* to speak any language other than Italian, and that gave me the advantage, since I was *forbidden* to answer their questions in German. And the school must have been quite satisfied of my technique in teaching, as when I told them that I was quitting the job because I was going to Paris, they gave me recommendations for the Berlitz school in Paris, assuring me that they would take me over there. But I never presented myself once I was in Paris, because a friend offered to teach me as a cabinet-maker building the beautiful French furniture, in which I worked fewer hours each day, and earned more

than teaching. And the reason that I liked teaching less was also that I would be busy until 9 o'clock in the evening, and I always have wanted to have the evening free, as I liked to go to the opera. And so ended my career as a professor, although a couple of girls among my pupils when I quit to go to Paris cried. And I hope that my pupils never guessed that I was professor only by... accident; and that if any among them had some doubts about my qualifications as a teacher (I had from forty to forty-five daily, the maximum being six to a class at that time in the Berlitz school), they must have forgive me for the good will I employed in pushing them forwards as fast as possible. From the moment I entered the class I pushed them at full speed in talking, talking, talking, first because I liked to see them making progress, and second also as a way of protecting my soup, since I would not let them ask questions out of place and lose time in nonessentials. They were there to learn to speak, and speak they did, each one of them, whether they were twenty or seventy years of age, men or women. And I was glad to see that all regretted my departure. But my adventurous spirit called me elsewhere. Even the young beautiful widow whose house I rented a room in cried the last night before my departure, although we practically never saw each other in the more than six months that I lived there, due to the fact that when I reached home late at night she was already in bed, and in the morning she had to leave the house early to go to work, while I was still in bed. And she had to wait until the last night to confess that she... loved me. Imagine the magic of a... professor.

“But beautiful!” I told her, “why didn’t you tell me that before! We could have passed more beautiful nights!”

“But how, I, a poor girl, could I hope to be loved by a professor?”

I had to laugh, saying that she was as great a professor as I was. So at least we had *one* night of love.

Naturally we, as deserters, we didn’t have any legal docu-

ments that would state our identity, so we could not get visas to move around from nation to nation. Therefore we also had to pass once more the border illegally. And as I didn't want to pass through Switzerland once more, I and the other comrade who was with me had to choose another road. From London Rudolf Rocker had arrived in Berlin. A well-known anarchist. We went to see him in the hope that we would know some comrade near the border that could help us in passing through to Belgium and France. He sent us to a German comrade in Düsseldorf, and in the house of this comrade, who did we find? The Italian comrade who had followed me from Switzerland to Germany, and ended in the same jail we were, who later I met in Stuttgart by surprise. And by surprise there I met him again.

He was working in the building trades, in Düsseldorf this work was plentiful, and well-paid, so he didn't have any desire to come with us. Besides he told us he was very much in love with... a nun, who was working in a hospital where he at the moment was working; and she was also in love with him, at night the nun succeeding in disappearing for a few hours from the hospital, allowing them to pass the time together in a little park nearby. And for hours he did nothing but described for us the beauty of the nun. He was even busy in trying to make an anarchist out of her; and I wonder if later they put half a dozen children into this world. I never met him again. And I hope that she didn't make a monk out of him, instead of him making an anarchist out of her... Next day we arrived in Paris.

In passing from Berlin—where there was such a scarcity of all goods—to Paris, where nothing was lacking, it was like passing from a place of penance—the defeat in the war—to a place of joy—the victory in the war. There was everything, and work was abundant. Not for nothing had 1,500,000 corpses remained on the battlefields. They had left the place of work for the living. The purveyors lived in Paris in plenty, while in Berlin we were living on the border of hunger, my dinners of a professor, at one mark a lesson, still feeding me only soups

of cabbages and potatoes, while in Paris, as apprentice cabinet-maker I succeeded in earning from 3.5 to 4 francs an hour, and with 3.5 francs I could get a good complete dinner—fixed price—in a restaurant. Even if I had worked as a lathe-hand as I did it later on in various occasions, it was also 3.5 an hour, and for a furnished room in a small hotel, without steam (none had it at that time in the rooms for workers), I never paid more than 17 francs *a week*. And in the room was a coal stove on which—if you bought the coal—you could cook your meals, and at the same time warm up the room if it was winter. In a word, with one hour of work you could get a good dinner. While in Berlin with one mark I hardly got the soup of cabbage and potatoes.

In France there was a lot of reconstruction to be done, as there were a lot of things that had been demolished. And since France is “rich” compared to the miserable Italy at that time, where work has always been scarce, there was work in quantity. In Italy at the end of the war it was scarce, I myself while hiding in Milan for four months tried to get some job in some peaceful and safe place, and I wasn’t able to find any. Although it is true, that with a heavy conviction hanging on me for desertion, I could not expose myself too much in looking. A number of times I was at the point of falling in the hands of those with whom I didn’t want to get acquainted, and one of those times, in Milan, there was a kind of revolt against high prices, when many stores of food, and other goods, were expropriated by the furious and hungry masses; finding myself precisely in a place where the crowd discovered a warehouse full of Parmesan cheese forms, each one of them perhaps a hundred pounds or more, that the owner didn’t want to sell because he wanted the price to go up. Well, I and others, we rolled all those parmesan forms out into the street, and I also got one which I began to roll in the street like a big wheel; and rolling it I wanted to reach my district, and there divide it among all the neighbors, the district being a mile away. I never reached it, as on the way people began to follow me until somebody jumped out of a door with a big hatchet and began to chop it to pieces and distribute it among the crowd. I got my big piece,

and I never ate a more tasty parmesan. And all this happened in the sight of the police, who must have had the order not to provoke the crowd... which was in the mood for revolution. I, naturally, as the... angel who had brought the parmesan, vanished as soon as I had my piece, as the police who had seen who had rolled the parmesan. A happy day for the starving masses, who had some vengeance against the speculators who wanted them to go hungry.

In Paris the anarchist movement bloomed immediately, as soon as the war ended. And in Italy, very few anarchists had declared themselves in favor of the war, and the few who did, and were thought of for years to be kind of leaders of the anarchist movement, in becoming patriots and believing that France was more civilized than Germany, and therefore it was necessary to exterminate Germans in order to save the allied "civilization", remained almost without... troops. The great majority of anarchists remained anti-war and anti-patriotic. A good number of French comrades escaped to Switzerland, almost all stopping in the French cantons, which are four of some twenty-two, one or two Italian, and the rest German. Many other French comrades escaped to Spain, having a choice between two nations, while we Italians only had Switzerland.

From 1920 on, little by little, many comrades began to come to Paris, during the war, some, like me, having found refuge in Switzerland, while others, by the tens of thousands, hid in the mountains in Italy, unable to reach Switzerland. So in Paris we formed quite a group, all scattered around town according to the job the comrades were doing.

And for the French comrades, besides the deserters, a certain number, not having successfully deserted, ended up in jail, like Armand. But as soon as the war ended, the movement reorganized itself quickly, divided into communist anarchists and individualist anarchists, each with their publication, sometimes working together in propaganda without any conflicts, and without any difference as to which tendency

a comrade belonged. And it was for this reason that in the following years they were able to achieve the formidable task of publishing *The Anarchist Encyclopedia*, which both anarcho-communists and individualist anarchists collaborated on. Without this close relationship it is impossible to imagine how the *Encyclopedia* could have been realized. The intellectual elements would have been missing, and so too the money. I, naturally, as I know how to adapt myself to all situations, in spite of the fact that I am an individualist, I have always worked with all anarchists no matter what they call themselves, an anarchist is an anarchist, and philosophically is always easier to agree with them, communists or individualists, and consider them as... brothers.

And as languages are my passion, I mixed up immediately with the French comrades, French being a language I have found easy to learn, as the Milanese dialect has the same difficult pronunciation as the French, which saved me most of the difficulties in learning it. Naturally with the help of my preferred teachers: the girls, with whom I always mixed... naturally; in this case not refusing to teach them Italian in exchange for French, instead of German. Exchange for exchange has always been my politics in love.

Soon in the course of 1920, from Italy also came Mantovani, whom I had left in Milan when I departed for Berlin. Ghezzi and Bruzzi also came, all close friends; besides comrades, Ghezzi and Bruzzi were also individualists. But as we all worked together we never asked each other who we were, the anarchist movement never having been sectarian. If in the movement there was some conflict once in a while, this generally happened among elements of the same tendency, rather than between individualist and communist anarchists. And always when we had to face the enemies of anarchism, we were all on the same barricade. And this probably is the most beautiful aspect of anarchism: the hatreds are short, and the solidarity lasting.

It was still in 1920 when Mantovani and I, from Paris, decid-

ed to go to explore what was going on beyond the Pyrenees, that is Spain, which until then to us seemed still a rather mysterious country, more African than European. The reason probably was that it was still rare to find a Spanish anarchist in Paris. In fact in 1920 I didn't meet a single one in Paris, and Mantovani and I were very curious to know them. And there we were on the train on our way to Barcelona. Why we chose Barcelona instead of Madrid I have no idea. As soon as we arrived we went to the store of a comrade (somebody had given us the address) and after two hours in his place, the news must have run around that two Italian comrades had arrived (we were also a curiosity for them, the contact between Italian and Spanish anarchists being rare until then) and the Spanish comrades began to drop in to get acquainted with us. Which made us feel at home. Perhaps we were two of the rare Italian anarchists who had come to Spain since Fanelli came at the time of Bakunin. I'm joking, naturally. But the fact is that our arrival produced a kind of sensation, and many comrades came to know us and to offer their help if we needed it. We really felt like being in our international family, even if we had to converse, we in Italian, them in Spanish. And it took me and Mantovani only a couple of weeks to be gabbing some kind of Spanish, at least enough to be able to converse with the comrades and make ourselves perfectly understood, due to the similarity of the two languages, and helped also with some French. What moved us so much, also, was their spontaneous solidarity; we, after all, being totally unknown to them. This is the value of belonging to the anarchist family. We meet brothers and sisters where there is an anarchist in the world. I know this by experience in my many travels in practically all the countries of the five continents. Where there is an anarchist, male or female, there is a house and a family waiting to give us welcome. And ours is perhaps the unique ideology that creates this spirit of solidarity for real brotherhood, without the desire of gaining power over people.

I found a job as a turner the same day to begin the next day, but for Mantovani, being a printer, there was the problem with lan-

guage, he not knowing any Spanish. With the difference that for me it was enough to look at a drawing and I knew what to do without even the need of exchanging a word, while for him it was at least necessary to be able to read Spanish fluently in order to... be able to *produce* for a capitalist employer. Luckily a comrade from Tarragona happened to come to Barcelona and Mantovani went with him to Tarragona to help compose a weekly for the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist paper.

But our work didn't last long, and mine ended even before his, the not so gentle police intervening. But he got the worst, as he ended in jail; while I, informed in time, had the time to go into hiding before the police could put their hands on me. And here is how it happened.

In the little shop of about thirty workers, where I worked, a French comrade also worked, who was also a deserter of the war from the French army; after years of exile, he had a great desire to visit his family in France, a thing which naturally he could not do in his own name. When he heard that I had just arrived from Paris, being a Parisian, he began to beg me to lend him some of my certificates of work, of which I had a few, and which we had the habit in Paris to lend them to each other in order to find work. A common practice among anarchists where work certificates count almost like passports to move around. When I finally consented to lend him a couple of my certificates, I warned him that he would not succeed in fooling the French police at the border, as he knew only a few words of Italian. But so great was his desire to see his family, and then remain in Paris clandestinely, which with my false papers would have been for him very easy, made him try in spite of the risk. So he departed the next day.

They were just fifteen days that I was working in the place, and sixteen since I had arrived, and still I had not found a furnished room for myself, so I was sleeping a few days here and a few days there. The very same day that in the morning the French comrade had departed, in the evening a policeman, secretly sympathizing with the anarchists, notified that the French comrade had been arrested at the

frontier, and that they should tell me the next day not to go to work because the police would go there to arrest me also. Obviously the French comrade had failed, and the police probably having found on him some paper of where he was working, it didn't take them long to suspect that who gave him the false papers was working at that same place. But the comrades didn't know where that night I went to sleep, so a dozen comrades all night went from furnished room to furnished room searching for me. They found me at five in the morning, just in time to save me from arrest. And the worst would have been that they would have deported me to Italy. And who found me was Maria Rascon, a comrade who was a pearl of a girl. She brought me to her room, where for a week I and her brother, also an anarchist, slept on the iron mattress of her bed while she slept on the mattress on the floor; the apartment also being the tailor's shop of some French comrades, Maria learning from them to be a tailor. And with them I remained until they found a safer place for me to hide.

After a few weeks Mantovani was less lucky than me. While he was going in a car with the same comrade who had brought him from Barcelona, unfortunately they were not going alone. And in the road they met the police, who stopped them. And they found a pistol in the car, which the Spanish comrade was always carrying for his defense, the times being dangerous for the anarchists at that moment, as I will relate. They were arrested, as they didn't have the time to hide the pistol. The other comrade was released temporarily on bail, but Mantovani was kept in jail. I took the risk to go see him in jail in Tarragona in company with the other comrade, keeping my mouth shut so as to pass as another Spanish comrade, and only talking to him when the police were not listening. Mantovani informed me that he was already notified that he would be deported to Italy, as a "dangerous person". Deported in a boat to Genoa, Italy. When I learned of the day of deportation we planned to free him while he was being brought to the boat, but after studying well the situation we realized that we could not succeed without some shooting on both sides; and Mantovani, we not

having the time to inform him, would he agree to take the risk? After all he was not a deserter like me who deserted when I was already in uniform. He had deserted before being in uniform, therefore his penalty was much lighter than mine. And if we tried and failed to free him, that would have loaded him with years in jail in Spain itself. We had to give up, and he was deported to Italy.

In Barcelona in that year, like in the previous year, a terrible reaction had broken out against the anarchists in general. The syndicates and anarcho-syndicalist Athenaeums were closed and put outside the law. All the organizations of the CNT and FAI were still working, but underground, at great risk; in fact at the risk of death for all the known elements. And I, being an anarchist, automatically became one of them, being also in hiding, and being searched for with them.

For almost two years already the great industrialists of Barcelona, in fear of the great strength that the CNT had acquired, wanted to destroy it by assassinating the most active anarchists, who were those who were keeping it alive. Therefore they were financing groups of *pistoleros*, real political gangsters for hire, whose job was to assassinate as many anarchists as possible; naturally with the protection of the police which was helping them out in their murderous work. And therefore at our arrival dozen and dozens of anarchists had been murdered: surprised in the streets, in cafés, any places they could find them, and killed in cold blood with their pistols. That is why they were called *pistoleros*. And at that moment not a week would pass without some comrade of ours being murdered. But by then, it was not only our comrades who were being killed. Anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, tired of being murdered like lambs, decided to start defending themselves. And they could only defend themselves with arms in their hands. *Pistoleros* against *pistoleros*. And the situation had arrived at such a point that as many bourgeois and *los del libre*—who were the *pistoleros* financed by the bourgeois—were being killed as anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists.

The name of the owners of the shop I was working was Laires or Layres. They were two brothers, and although bourgeois, they must have been very honest people, liberal, with a heart of gold, rare to find. To help me out financially, in agreement with the comrades who were those who had organized the place in the CNT they allowed me to go back to work clandestinely in the shop for a couple of hours, and feign an accident on the job so that while in hiding I could get paid the insurance for accidents, and so be able to make a living for more than two months while the police were searching for me. And what the insurance didn't pay me, they paid me extra themselves out of their pockets so that I received the full pay and did not... suffer. So not all the industrialists were against the anarchists.

And besides, to complete the picture of such a family of wonderful people, there was a third brother, a cripple. He was one of the best lawyers in Barcelona, and he was the one who was daring to defend the anarchists when they were brought to trial, knowing that by doing so he was risking his life. But that didn't deter him, the man having a lion's courage. And one day the *pistoleros del libre* murdered him with their pistols, as they had murdered so many other comrades; the comrades having arrived to the point that they began to refuse to come out of jail, because they knew that the *pistoleros*, protected by the police, were hiding outside ready to shoot them down.

In learning of the murder of Laires, proletarian Barcelona was ready to revolt, so indignant were the people. On the day of the funeral the city was paralyzed, spontaneously, since the CNT and the anarchists were outlawed. The tremendous multitude that followed the funeral took hours to pass. All working people were there. No king had ever had such an honor, and caused in the hearts of the people so much grief. That day I came out of my hiding place to see them pass hour after hour. It was mourning for most of Barcelona, and especially for us, for a man who was not even an anarchist, but he had associated with us to help us in the hour of our greatest need.

All our movement being clandestine, captured in their illegal activity, about 400 comrades were filling a good part of the *Cárcel Modelo* of Barcelona, of which I had to become myself a... tenant seventeen years later during the Spanish Civil War. Put there by the stalinist Cheka because I had surprised them while they were treacherously bombarding a group of anarchists who were occupying a building, and I called the Chekists traitors of the revolution. But I will speak later on of this episode of communist treason.

For the anarchists of that time who passed from one reactionary regime to the other, solidarity with the comrades in jail and their families which had been left without means of support due to their men being in jail, was something sacred. As poor as they were, they always made enormous sacrifices in order to spare the families of the prisoners from hunger. In the illegality in which all the comrades had to to work, the members of the CNT and the anarchists—most of the comrades belonged to the CNT besides the FAI—had voted to give the equivalent of one hour's work weekly, which amounted generally to one peseta, for those in jail. And there were comrades who week after week would pass from job to job and collect the *pesetas* which went into a fund that generally assured the full pay to the prisoners, which was also delivered to the families all around Barcelona. At the risk of their lives, because the *pistoleros* would place themselves in ambush to shoot down even these comrades occupied in that humanitarian task. The *pistoleros* didn't respect anything. I know this personally, as I in my hiding place, with the help of the woman of the apartment who was a sympathizer of the CNT, for two months we were the two who received the *pesetas* and made out the envelopes with the collection, some comrade bringing the money, and others picking up the envelopes. And when it became too dangerous for the men to do this, work, after a number of them had been killed, the women took over and they brought the money to the families; most *pistoleros*, being Spaniards, still respected women more than men. And I continued to

do this work until one day three men came to the apartment. They didn't look suspicious. One of them asked me:

“Are you ready?”

“To do what?”

“To depart... for a long trip.”

“To do that I'm always ready... Where to?”

“Argentina.”

“Argentina, the country of the gauchos? Let's go!”

“Your valise?”

“I don't have any. I travel light!”

“Fine! Fewer complications.”

With a little bundle, surrounded by my three custodian angels—they were members of the CNT—after kisses and tears from my beautiful collaborator, this time without difficulties and almost without risks, I boarded a Spanish transatlantic. Two hours later the anchor was raised. Direction: Buenos Aires. It seemed like the comrades had found out that my situation was getting too dangerous where I was, and they couldn't find anything safer. So sure that I wouldn't object, when the right opportunity came along they... shipped me overseas. And I was grateful to them. All for free, naturally. This time at the expense of our persecutors.

Although it was considered the best passenger boat that Spain possessed at that time, the *Alfonso XIII* I think, it took twenty-one days to reach Buenos Aires. I mixed immediately with the other passengers as if I were one of them, and they never suspected that I was a stowaway. Only two days before reaching Buenos Aires I disappeared from among them, because my three angels hid me in one of the rescue boats, so that the counting officers would not find out that they had one passenger too many. Who knows what the other passengers thought of my disappearance? That I had fallen into the sea and had gotten lost during the night? I never met any of them afterwards in Buenos Aires to ask them, and I only once went to see a charming

girl with whom during the long trip on the beautiful nights I borrowed some kisses, and it would have pleased me very much to return them to her in order not to be in debt. But it happened that at the address she gave me I was greeted by her father, who was a barber, and I didn't like his looks. As I was hoping that she would appear, I decided to take a shave. Ah! From the moment he started to handle that razor around my throat he looked more and more suspicious, perhaps while thinking: what is this stranger doing here in my barber shop since I have never seen him before in this neighborhood?... In spite of the fact that barbers are generally loquacious he never said a word to make my acquaintance... I didn't like it. When the daughter timidly showed up at the door, she could only send me a smile, before he made a brusque gesture for her to retire. And that I liked still less. I figured while he was caressing me the last few times with that damn razor, that perhaps he had already prepared a prospective husband for her, and in seeing a total stranger he had suspected immediately that this was a guy who was a menace to his projects, and he became as nasty as he could in order to clear the field. He succeeded. I didn't feel like passing under his razor again. After all I was not looking for a wife, and my intentions were not... honorable, as they say, an anarchist being an enemy of legal matrimony. In all my life I have never asked a father or a mother or priest or bureaucrat for permission to kiss a woman. Her consent has always been enough.

The trip, though, was ideal! The danger of being discovered without a ticket was practically non-existent because one of the three comrades was the guard on board. He was supposed to be the one to discover me. Instead he would warn me when a check was going to take place, and he would tell me where to place myself, which was the section he would check. The second comrade was in charge of the pastry shop, and did I put down cakes and quarts of ice cream! As for the first week I was seasick I lived on them, sneaking into the pastry shop by order of the comrade. After all they didn't want to deliver me in Buenos Aires to the comrades, dead!

Of the whole trip, I still remember as if it were yesterday the frightened look that the girl had given me when upon coming into the shop she discovered me under her father's razor. She realized the uncomfortable situation I was in and seemed to be telling me:

“What can I do? My father is ferocious!”

So it was good-bye to a romance that lasted only a brief few nights, as is generally the plight of world wanderers who never remain long enough in one place to form a nest and build a family...

The three anarchist angels left me in the safe hands of a comrade and his wife in Buenos Aires. They had been notified by cablegram that I was coming, the third comrade on board being in charge of cablegrams and news. I could not have fallen into better company on my first trip at sea: the guardian, the pastryman, and the telegraph operator. If the officers had discovered me, could they have thrown me into the sea? In a minute the whole world would have known that a precious anarchist had been thrown to the fish. What a scandal! A mortal enemy of all dictators barbarously executed! And all the world would have... cried for the irreparable loss! Luckily for me nothing tragic happened. And so in leaving me in Buenos Aires the cake maker told me, “If you don't find work and you are hungry, when we return come to see me. You will always find a cake here.” Could I find better angels than these, I who like cakes so much? In fact, even without being hungry, I went to thank them on their return for all the help they had given me at the risk of being discovered and losing their jobs. The word of the pastry-cook was golden. After a few times I stopped visiting them, embarrassed by their generosity.

At that time in Buenos Aires work was poor. When it could be found it generally didn't last long, as there was a kind of unemployment crisis. Being flexible in trades and professions, I did a variety of them in order not to go hungry. After three months in Barcelona and three weeks on the boat, Spanish had become familiar to me. Language was no longer a problem for me. I worked a few weeks as a turner, and

then there was no more work. My co-workers and I found ourselves in the street with few pesos in our pockets. As this state of affairs came unexpectedly, I think the owner himself was surprised. Therefore after a few weeks without work, the few *scudos* I had saved while working had disappeared. Totally. I should not have worried myself because I would not be without a bed and food. I was still living with the comrades who had received me; he was working as a tax man and earning well, and she was working as a dressmaker in the house and in case of necessity she could also be a nurse. In fact an emergency happened in which her ability as a nurse was required.

A rather mature girl, desperately in need of a husband, had found a man with plenty of pesos who fell in love with her. He wanted to marry her... with one condition. If she were still a virgin. Can you imagine such an absurdity in modern times? But at the end of 1920 such idiocy was still seriously asked by many men with retarded brains. The girl, who had lost her virginity on the tempestuous roads of her life, had a real problem. In tears she confessed to the nurse her impending danger of losing her chance, after she had desperately in all those years been looking for a husband. And the prospective husband was so well stocked with pesos! The tears were flowing abundantly down her cheeks. I, in a corner, reading a book, could hardly restrain my tears at the presence of so much suffering of the poor girl, who knowing the ability of our comrade, was begging her for help urgently, as the man wanted to marry her immediately. And what a disaster it would be for her if the first night of matrimony she would not shed blood, for him the sign of her virginity. And all this explained between laughing and crying, explaining also that he wanted her virgin, not at the price of her love, but his money, which he adored more than the love of his future wife. Then between one laugh and the other, our comrade asked her:

“Tomorrow you really want to be a virgin?”

“Either I am a virgin or without a husband!”

“We can fix that.”

“But how if I have slept five years with my old lover... the skunk running away afterwards?”

“Well... do you have a cat?”

“A cat?... I don’t like cats!”

“You will like this one... who sacrifices himself for your happiness!”

“He has one, who he adores more than me.”

“The scoundrel!”

“I swore to him that I am a virgin, and he considers me his wife, and he has given me the key of his apartment in order that I should go there to kill the fleas of his cat, as he wants the cat to be present at our wedding, and he doesn’t want him to scratch in the presence of everybody.”

“And when is the wedding?”

“Tomorrow! Ah! What bad luck! To be so near to the paradise that for so many years I dreamed about, and to lose it... because I have amused myself a little bit. And he is not ugly!”

“Steal the cat from him!”

“Steal the cat? But he’ll kill me to deprive him of his darling! What would I tell him if he doesn’t find him there anymore?”

“That he has forgotten to close the window, and the cat has gone to have his fleas scratched by another cat.”

“That he can believe. Other times he forgot to close the window tight and the cat has run away. And until he came back he almost went crazy!”

“As long as he doesn’t go crazy before he marries you.”

“And what do I do with the cat?”

“Bring him here dead, the poor thing!... He will make the present of your virginity to your future husband. If he will not have the cat anymore, he will at least be able to glory in himself for all the years to come, that in the declining years of his life, with his beauty he had still been able to win a flower of a girl... still virgin.” And, turning to me: “You will have to help me make this girl... virgin. I won’t be

able to do the work alone."

Two hours later the girl came back, crying, with the dead cat. The comrade took from it some fine nerves, and with them she delicately sewed the girl's vagina. I held the girl steady while she was heroically keeping her mouth closed in order not to shout from the pain. A few days later, she happily related to us that the first night of matrimony, in trying more than once to break through the barriers, her husband provoked a massacre, flooding the bed with blood. In seeing it he danced with happiness like a lunatic. He had found the virgin he was looking for... thanks to the artistry of our comrade.

And still I could not find work. I was looking for anything that would come along, as I hate to depend on other people, even if they are willing to help. It is different when one is in danger: then every anarchist tries to save a comrade, male or female, from the jaws of the enemy. Now if I who can handle various kinds of jobs had difficulty finding work, it was harder for those who could only do one thing or wanted to do only one thing. The unemployed were in great number, and at that time were no unemployment benefits. Therefore everybody had to manage by themselves as well as they could, working comrades earning just enough to live, themselves and their families. Practically nobody had any savings. One morning while scanning the newspaper I discovered that a family was looking for a *mucamo*. And who is a *mucamo* in Argentina? A servant. So a servant I will be, I said to myself, starting immediately on my way to the indicated address. After all a servant is given food to eat and a place to live, even if the salary is small. And there I was ringing the bell of a bourgeois family who occupied the whole first floor. Immediately a charming girl showed up.

"Are you the lady?" I ask her, pleased (feminine beauty always having hit me).

"Noooo! I am the daughter. I'm only 18. And who are you?"

"I am the *mucamo*... of quality!" I answered with a smile... not

too *mucamesque*. She seemed to be satisfied with what she saw as, after all, I was also young at that time.

“*Mamá! Mamá!*” she shouted joyfully, “A *mucamo* is here.” I must have beaten everybody in speed, the other competitors beginning to arrive after me. Perhaps I was the hungriest. And there came *mamá*, also appetizing, with another daughter, twenty years old. The mother studied me from head to foot, remaining a little in doubt of my quality as a servant, which convinced me that the *mucamo* she saw didn’t convince her.

“But... are you a *mucamo*?” at last she asked me. The answer had already flashed in my mind.

“Yesss!! I have just arrived from Paris... where I served in the house of... Count Rochambeau!” I remembered that I had read it in a novel, convinced that she had never heard of him. But I was wrong. She was more versed in literature than I had imagined.

“The Count ROOchambooo!!!” she exclaimed, surprised. “But you don’t look like a *mucamo*!”

“I don’t? Lady, it is my lifelong profession, and—”

“Alright, alright! You are engaged. Go immediately to get the bed.”

“The bed? What bed?”

“But yours!” she answered, impatiently. “You don’t want me to let you sleep in mine!”

“Beh... But I don’t have a bed. In Paris the bed is furnished by the owner.”

“Here everybody in service brings theirs.”

I was seeing my job vanishing, and with it my dinners.

“Lady, I am not used to such a custom, and if necessary I will buy it. But not today.”

I didn’t have the money, and further I had no intention of doing such a foolish thing as looking for a job with a bed on my shoulders, for even if I had my bed at home—if I had a home—it would have amounted to the same thing. I also figured that I had no

intention of making a career as a *mucamo*.

“Then good-bye! Here there is no bed for you.”

She was getting impatient and somebody else was climbing the stairs, probably an authentic *mucamo*. At the noise of our conversation the servant and the cook, both a little seasoned but still attractive females, joined us. Obviously I was in a house of women, no husband having appeared. At the threat of sending me away, the servant shouted:

“Lady, lady! Until he buys the bed I will lend him mine, and I will sleep with the cook,” who agreed. As the lady hesitated, the second daughter pleaded:

“*Mamá, mamá*, let’s take him, please!” Four women, and they didn’t want to lose such a treasure dropped from Paris. The mother, faced with that united front, had to surrender. And there I was, engaged as a servant, a profession I had not yet done, but I was curious to have the experience. The cook and the servant brought me immediately into the kitchen, and the first thing that the cook told me was:

“I will give you a good dinner... then you will start to work.” We had understood each other immediately.

“What work?” I confessed to them, confidentially. “And thanks for the dinner... which comes right in time to fill up a big emptiness.”

“We understood right away that you had never done this kind of work,” and the three of us laughed.

“But now what am I supposed to do?” I asked them while I was filling my mouth with the delicious things that the cook had put in front of me. They explained to me rapidly what my function was; answer the door, go to buy things which were not the concern of the kitchen, make deliveries, every day wash the marble stairs that led to the first floor, and above all, serve at the table for the lady and her two daughters, with great dignity and in uniform. The work was not much or hard, but at noon when the lady saw the clumsy way I served at the table, she pulled her hair.

“But how can I invite people to dinner, and present to them such a *mucamo*? All Buenos Aires will laugh!” And she almost started to cry, desperate. But here the two daughters, having never seen such a ridiculous *mucamo* and finding me amusing, came to my defense.

“Mamá, mamá! He will learn!”

But when?” she shouted, escaping from the table.

With one excuse or another I succeeded in holding the bastion for a whole week, by also using the subterfuge—when the mother was not in the house—of sitting with the daughters on the steps of the marble stairs and singing French songs to them. They were mad about these songs which then I knew by the dozen, all composed by our comrades of the Muse Rouge, a group of very talented anarchist musicians, the two girls not knowing a word of French. It was only thanks to their defending me that I was able to last a whole week, as the mother was getting sicker and sicker of me with every day that passed, obliged as she was to deprive herself of the company of her friends for fear of showing them a monstrosity of a *mucamo* like me—Paris or no Paris. Finally she gave me an ultimatum: I was to bring a bed and buy a uniform for serving at the table, because on principle she could not violate the general custom that servants had to bring their own beds. I clearly answered that as a *mucamo* from Paris, I also, and on principle, must tell her that it was *she* not I, who had to furnish the bed. Both of us were unmovable, and I had to leave the place... amidst the tears of the daughters who were losing their Parisian singer, that rarity of which they had perhaps boasted to their friends.

Having learned that I was without work, a comrade who was a cabinet-maker offered me a week of work to help a carpenter he had engaged to build some shelves in a store. He brought me to him and went away. I, as a helper, took the easiest part of the work, that of cutting the pieces of wood to measure. This I could do very well, having already done it for a short time in Paris. I passed the pieces to the carpenter as he built the shelves but in doing this I realized im-

An Anarchist Carpenter

mediately that the craftsman was no better than the helper. In fact, I was better, in Paris having at least learned to put together some pieces of furniture. But I kept silent, calculating that I would help him as much as I knew. Between the two of us the shelves would go up solid, and both of us would not come out badly with the comrade who had given us the job.

While I was sawing and sawing, as was my habit I began to sing the songs of the French comrades. Here there was no danger of losing the job since we were working for an anarchist. To the other songs I added one of my favorites, "Revolution!", a very stirring song. Hearing me singing "revolution" the carpenter stopped and scrutinized me, asking:

"And who are you?"

"An anarchist!" I answered, surprised.

"And I am another anarchist!"

"Good! And we two are working for a third anarchist. Didn't you know?"

"I would not even dream of it. Having read in the paper that they asked for a carpenter, a comrade lent me the tools and I presented myself. To tell you the truth, I am more of a journalist than a carpenter."

"I had guessed it. As a carpenter you are no better than the apprentice, who is me." And now between the two of us, let's do the work the best we can in order not to dishonor the comrade who gave us the work to do."

And we built it so solid that fifty years later, on a visit that I paid to this comrade in Buenos Aires, he stopped in front of a store and he told me full of pride:

"Let's go in, I want to show you that masterpiece you and I built. After fifty years it hasn't collapsed yet!"

But his companion, who must have lived through that scene many times, shouted:

"Eh! Stop! Do you want your shelves to last forever? They have been demolished!" We had a good laugh. It was Diego Abad de Santillán.

When we finished the work and were in possession of our wages (both living with two different families of comrades) we decided to use our capital to rent a room for ourselves. At the time a room was the average "apartment" in which most working people lived in Argentina. Ours was about twelve feet by sixteen, bare of everything, with just a hanging electric light in the middle. It had no window, the air coming in when the door was opened, the upper part being made of glass for light during the day, with sometimes families of half a dozen people living in it. It was not surprising, as it was rumored that about 30% of the population of Buenos Aires suffered from tuberculosis, each in one room like us, with one kitchen and one toilet for everybody. And the room had no running water or any accommodations whatsoever. That was the life of most proletarians at that time in Buenos Aires. And so we had the luxury of having our own apartment.

That same week Santillán, who had worked on a bourgeois newspaper as a journalist in the province, became one of the editors of the *Protesta*, the daily of the Argentinian CNT. I with one job or another managed to live like any other worker, until I got a job from the CNT in a garage, washing bourgeois cars (there were no proletarian cars at that time, when workers could hardly earn enough to feed their families) by hand for many months, up to the end of my stay in Buenos Aires.

(I must say that if there were so many tubercular people in Buenos Aires, the reason was not only due to the bad lodgings. Perhaps another cause was that the Argentinians were great meat eaters, as meat was cheap compared to other foods. I still remember that at the picnics which anarchists would organize in the woods, the first thing that would be set up was a huge piece of meat, sometimes half a cow with a fire under it. When it was cooked everybody would go there to cut the piece that they wanted to eat. The Argentinians were meat eaters, and I, a half-vegetarian, was horrified.

Another contributor to tuberculosis must have been the bad

habit that everybody had of drinking *mate*, a kind of tea, from the same pot, which was passed from one person to the next, sucking the liquid of the *mate* through the same straw, passed from mouth to mouth, even if there were a dozen people in the group. They never succeeded in convincing me that such disgusting habits constituted no danger to the health of the people taking any part. It was a common practice of most Argentinians, at least among the working people. What a way of passing tuberculosis and syphilis—to speak only of these—from one person to another, when in 1921 tuberculosis was still the principal cause of sickness and death. My screaming against the cursed habit only made them laugh. For them I was a fool who deprived himself of enjoying a celestial drink.)

Well, such an “apartment” was the only one Santillán and I could afford to have. Furniture? Two three foot wide beds, two chairs, and a three by four foot table, which served mostly for writing, and an electrical bulb. That was all the furniture. Later on another comrade came to join us, buying another bed. So the three empty walls were now occupied with our clothes hanging on them. If a fourth comrade didn’t come to keep us company and help to pay the thirty pesos rent a month it was only because the fourth wall was occupied by the entrance double door. To put a bed in the middle would not have left enough room to move around. We certainly were not living in luxury, nor were most of the other working people. We never tried to prepare any warm meals there, nor drink, because we would have been forced to keep company with a half dozen women in a single kitchen that served for all the families, and we either ate cold food or, when we could afford it, we ate outside in some cheap place like everybody else. What we earned could just cover the expenses for the principal necessities, with some amusements thrown in, and no saving of any money, the wages for a qualified worker were one peso an hour, and just to pay rent of the bare room took thirty hours of work. We had to get used to that kind of life, as it was the life of practically all working people. After all we were only two, and later three, in the room, while in other

similar rooms whole families were living; the janitor, for example, had four children, and a sick husband in the hospital. Therefore for a few months Santillán and I were still privileged people enjoying a whole room with only two people.

I have to remark at this point that in spite of the kind invitations of the women to go and partake of the joys of the kitchen with them, we never accepted the invitation. I for shame, being a bad cook and not wanting them to discover it, and Santillán because of shyness in finding himself in the company of so many women, in such close quarters. A thing which didn't frighten me; as it happened, one of the beauties, with a heart full of tenderness scarcely utilized, because her husband consumed himself in playing the clarinet in an orchestra, and was forgetting to make good use of home, leaving the poor beauty desperate, offered to console me for lonesomeness with the tenderness which so idiotically was being wasted, with joy for nobody. And Santillán must have wondered how, while he was writing one article for the next day's *La Protesta*, two or three nights a week, when the stars were shining, in naked feet, not to disturb the sweet sleep of the neighbors, I would disappear in one house of the neighborhood, and reappear only two or three hours later to our bare room, bringing some romance with me; he never dared to ask me where the moon was shining better than in our room, and I never revealed to him the mystery of my love.

It was a few months later that another comrade came unexpectedly to keep us company, because not knowing a word of Spanish, nobody among the comrades could understand him. He was Kurt Wilckens, a German comrade who had lived many years in the United States, working as a miner. Being very active in the IWW, for that reason he was deported to Germany, from where he had come to Argentina. And as I was the only one who could understand German, the comrades asked Santillán and me if we would take him in with us. To which we naturally agreed with pleasure, happy to help a comrades. His life later on ended tragically, and passed into Argentin-

ian history of the struggle of tyranny.

But before entering into it I want to mention a polemic in which I got involved in spite of myself for having denounced certain customs in the Argentinian and Spanish CNT, the Argentinian equivalent of the Spanish CNT being the FORA, which I considered authoritarian; a polemic which would call upon my head the ire of Santilli, a good comrade who, with another comrade, by the name of Pacheco, was publishing one of the best anarchist weeklies ever published. Authoritarian custom for an organization which called itself libertarian, as the FORA. I want to refer to this polemic as a lesson for the comrades who call themselves anarcho-syndicalist, as they can avoid such authoritarian practice, which can come naturally in their fervor to develop an anarcho-syndicalist organization... with authoritarian sins, because they think it more efficient. But that leads their supposed anarchism astray. And here is how the polemic came up.

Besides the daily *La Protesta*, which passed for the organ—more or less—of the FORA the weekly *Antorcha* had also passed for one of the organs of the anarchist movement, even better known abroad. Now in order to be able to get a job or be permitted to work in a job which was organized in FORA the organizers of which were mostly my “dear” anarchist comrades, I was forced to become a member of the Federación Obrera Regional Argentina—FORA—or otherwise be chased from the job. A monopoly of work, in my view as an anarchist, which I didn’t like at all. Because I consider that a working man, organized or not, has the right to work in any place of your choice as long as he or she doesn’t work below the wages of the organized people.

Now, if this abuse of power would have been practiced by an authoritarian organization it would not have surprised me, nor would it have made me so indignant. But that such a violation against my freedom and my right to earn my living in any place I wanted and could, and that this demonstration of authoritarianism would be applied against me by those who call themselves *my* comrades, anar-

chists, enraged all my fury. And I told those comrades clearly what I thought of their action. But I was forced to submit to their abuse of authority, because at that moment when I needed work, there was no other job to be had.

And what I found more repulsive in such practice was that, in order to acquire their authority, they had made a pact with my enemy, the capitalist who owned the garage, in which he agreed not to give any work to anybody who was not organized in the FORA. And my fury was doubled because the same thing had happened to me with the anarchist comrades in Barcelona organized in the CNT, where to be allowed to work in that small shop as a lather, I was forced to take out a book of the CNT or no work. And those who were the same anarchist comrades of mine who risked at the same time to go to jail or to lose their lives in order to save me from the police or the *pistoleros*. Can you imagine such contradictions with their ideas and their practices? Such simple things, logical, they could not understand. And I had worked in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and France, in shops where the majority of the workers were organized in socialist or simply syndicalist unions, and not once was I asked to join their organization or forced to work where they had an agreement with the owner.

So in my indignation I wrote an article for *Umanità Nova* in Rome, of which Errico Malatesta was the editor, denouncing such authoritarian practices in the name of anarchism. And that angered Antilli of the *Antorcha* particularly, because Malatesta added a note to my article agreeing with me; as Malatesta was in favor of anarchists working in workers' organizations, but was against the pretensions of anarcho-syndicalists that anarcho-syndicalism was sufficient to build up a new free society. Syndicalism was good to try to improve the conditions of the workers under capitalism, but deficient in building up a real free society. It took anarchism to do that. Antilli wrote then an article against me defending the right of the FORA to force workers to belong to their organization, where they had a pact with

the capitalist to preserve the place of work exclusively for the members of FORA. Antilli gets credit though, because he allowed a debate in the *Antorcha*, he writing a second article in defense of FORA's position, and me answering with another in the *Antorcha* itself. So each of us remained with the same opinion. The curious thing is that *La Protesta*, neither by the pen of Santillán nor any other of the editors, said a word in defense of FORA, although the paper was supposed to be supporting the union.

Not long after Kurt Wilckens, the German comrade, had come to join us, Santillán decided to go to Germany as a correspondent for *La Protesta*. And therefore Kurt Wilckens and I remained alone. Wilckens, in spite of his handicap of not knowing Spanish, immediately found work in the port, discharging boats. Unhappily Wilckens and I could not see much of one another during the week, as our hours of work didn't always combine. But we always had Sundays together, generally going to visit comrades in meetings.

He at the beginning was forced to keep silent most of the time, and just listen, with the advantage of knowing already two languages (German and English), which helped him pick up Spanish more easily. But in all he was of a rather reserved nature, with a tendency to keep his thoughts to himself even while speaking German with me. That probably was also due to the fact that he knew so little of the situation in Argentina, as he could not read the papers, and probably he had decided to wait until he was better acquainted with things as they were before discussing with us what was going on in the country.

And so a few months passed, a third comrade coming to temporarily live with us two, occupying the third wall left free by the departure of Santillán, this bringing us to the beginning of 1922. When Santillán was still with us a rumor was circulating that in Patagonia (the province on the south of Argentina, that is, the coldest because the nearest to the South Pole) a great massacre of anarchist workers was taking place. But the news was scarce, and not too accurate. So we

were living in terrible doubt. Because at that point Patagonia, with a territory more than three times larger than Italy, and very sparsely inhabited—being in great part barren and dry, mostly dedicated to breeding of sheep (millions of them)—was very little known, for lack of means of communication, and news was very difficult to get in Buenos Aires. It was precisely these shepherds and other workers organized by anarchists who were massacred in great numbers for daring to organize an anarcho-syndicalist organization in their defense. And today we know that more than 1,500 shepherds and similar workers had been murdered by the army at the service of the great landlords, as if they were cattle. And who commanded these troops that were slaughtering these anarchists? The rumor said: *coronel Varela!* But while I remained in Buenos Aires the rumor remained a rumor, with no precise information on the massacre. Therefore between Wilckens and I there was no occasion to talk about it.

Then, as the months passed, I became more restless with the life I was leading in Buenos Aires. I had the impression of living in a kind of cul-de-sac from which there was no way out, being isolated from the rest of the world. There I was, earning only enough to live and unable to put aside enough pesos to buy a ticket for a boat that would take me to north of the equator, where 90% of the population of the world lives. I came to feel that I was only vegetating, instead of living. A deeply psychological discontent, for wasting my life in that lost corner. Which convinced me that if I didn't want to be buried for years and years in Argentina, the only way to... save myself from that tomb, was to try to get out... free of charge, even without... angels to help me, like my trip from Barcelona to Buenos Aires. And to achieve this purpose, who better placed than Kurt Wilckens, working in the port, could help me? Therefore one evening I informed him of my desire: to hide in some boat and depart. He assured me with a smile, and said:

“Don't worry! I'll find a sure and cheap way for you, with all the boats in which I work discharging things. Where do you want to

go: to Europe or to the countries of the north?"

"Any country on the other side of the Equator. Then I'll decide where to stop."

"Be ready, because it could happen any day."

"I only need two minutes to prepare my bundle... so much is my property. You find the boat, and I'm ready to depart at any hour of day or night."

Only two days passed, and he came home exulting. It was 7 o'clock.

"I have just what suits you. I have arranged everything. It is an English boat, carrying oil, and going away empty."

"But I don't want to go to England!"

"It goes to Mexico. It departs at midnight, but we must meet the sailor that will hide you on board not later than 9 o'clock, in a café near the boat. And as I know that you don't have many pesos in your pocket, I have also arranged the amount of pesos you will have to give him when on board."

"How many?" still fearing that it was too much for me to give.

"Ten pesos."

"Ah!!!"

"They are too many? I will lend you the rest."

"Too few. But are you sure that he will do it for so little?"

"If he doesn't, after he agreed, and wants more money, I sure will twist his neck! Then I shall bring you myself on board and hide, without paying anything. They should be honored that you will keep them company during the long trip of twenty-four or five days, as the ship will not go too fast. Then we go in one hour in order to be at the café in time." It was already dark.

"Kurt, I disappear for one hour... I have a few tears to dry."

"You have the time. Whoever she is... dry a few tears for me also."

When after two hours we arrived at the café we found the sailor who had agreed to take me aboard dead drunk. He was sing-

ing with his comrades, equally drunk. Wilckens had to work to put him on his feet and pull him outside, while his comrades continued to sing and drink. The boat was practically in front of the the café. Wilckens began to shake the sailor, trying to remind him about the agreement they had made. While both of us were keeping him standing, Wilckens put the ten pesos under his nose. The sight of the money brought something back to his mind, and he made some effort to climb the gangway, but finished by laying down on the ground.

“We have to carry him up ourselves,” said Wilckens, “in the hope that after he’ll remember where to hide you.”

So helping me in loading him on my shoulders, and he supporting him by the legs, we climbed on board. After we shook him a little more, he pointed to a trapdoor. We understood. It was there inside that he wanted to hide me. We pulled him near and Wilckens and I pulled away the heavy cover of iron, and the sailor had enough strength to push me in, so I fell into the hole, and it seemed to me that I would never touch the bottom. I fell on a great pile of ropes, shaken but unhurt. Wilckens bent over the hole, and worried, whispered:

“Where are you? I don’t see you.”

“I am here over a pile of ropes.”

“Are you injured?”

“I don’t think so. I can still move.”

“Good! Then have a good trip! I will go before they discover me on board and get suspicious.”

Those were the last words that I heard from him. The trapdoor closed; I heard a noise of steps, then silence...

Up there remained the man who a few months later had to vindicate the 1,500 anarchists massacred in Patagonia... by killing with a bomb *el coronel* Varela, the murderer under whose command the massacre was carried out. Santillán and I would have never dreamed that such a peaceful man could have done it. What had happened after I left him alone? How did he come to know of the hor-

rendous, bestial, murderous acts that were being perpetrated against so many honest, poor workers, who were only agitating a little for correcting the miserable conditions in which they were forced to live like animals? How did he decide to avenge them, and in so doing sacrifice also his own life? Perhaps we shall never know, because it was only five months later that I received the word of what Wilckens had done, and it was from Santillán that I got it, by letter, in Paris, where Santillán wrote to me from Berlin, in which he explained to me what had happened. And here it is.

Wilckens waited for Varela in the street outside his house in Buenos Aires (probably having read in the papers that he had returned from murdering anarchist workers in Patagonia—I am only guessing), and when Varela came down to the street from his apartment, Wilckens threw the bomb at him. (Let's remember that he had been a miner in the United States before being deported, and therefore he must have been familiar with dynamite.) But in that moment a little girl came out of the same house, and Wilckens, in order to save her, jumped forwards protecting the girl, but himself was seriously wounded. So wounded he was admitted to the hospital under guard. After a short time Santillán wrote to me again that a relative of Varela went to the hospital with a rifle and killed Wilckens in his bed. And how could he do this, if Wilckens was closely guarded by the police?... The readers can draw their own conclusions.

After a few hours of being hidden in my hole I felt that the boat was beginning to move... and I went to sleep peacefully. And when I woke up, from a little light that filtered through a small hole I saw that it was day time; and later on when that little light disappeared I understood that night had come again. And with the darkness I expected that the... friend would bring me some water and something to eat. And instead the hours passed, and another night went by... and not a sign of the dear friend. Well, I figured, he probably tried and couldn't make it. For sure he will show up today... but drunk as he

was, does he remember that I am here? And hunger, and particularly thirst were beginning to act... And if he has forgotten that I am here? That was the truth that was beginning to dawn on me. A few more days inside that hole and they would get me out of there... as a corpse. And I considered myself too young to die so idiotically. Once the second day also had passed, and the third night of darkness had arrived, I decided that it was time to get out by myself... if I could, or start shouting so that they would pull me out. I knew that by now the boat was far away from the coast sufficiently to be no more in danger to be delivered by some other boat to be brought ashore in Uruguay to be sent back to Argentina. So by piling up all the rope on one side and climbing on top I succeeded in touching the trapdoor. And not hearing any noise outside, with great effort I succeeded in pushing the trapdoor aside and got out in the open. Ah! I was breathing! Perhaps I was suffocating inside.

It was dark, and nobody was outside, and the sailors must have already gone to sleep. But from a certain place was coming a brilliant light and such... perfume! Which only kitchens give. I presented myself in front of the open door and saw a fat man in front of stoves and saucerpans. He was the cook and must have been busy in preparing the meal for the officers, to justify that perfume. And I standing there silently in the middle of the door, to let him see that a new customer had arrived... out of the night. And when he turned his head and saw who for sure must have looked like a ghost, he could only say: "Oh!!!" and remained there stiff for a good two minutes, in surprise, without being able to say a word. And I was smiling, or thought I was smiling... with my hungry face. Finally he put down knives and forks and started to storm at me with a flood of questions. In English, naturally. And I kept smiling at him, and with the hand showing him that my belly was empty. I knew no English yet, but from the four languages I knew, some of his words I could guess, but I feigned not to understand anything of what he was saying. And what was the use of interrogating someone who didn't understand? So he

gave up.

He took me by the hand, pulled me to the bridge, and there the captain and the other officers were assembled, probably waiting for their dinner, of which I had interrupted the preparation. The cook must have explained to them how he had discovered me, and there followed from the captain new questions and shoutings, to which I, always smiling and making signs to him that I didn't understand. And since it seemed that they only knew English, soon they realized that it was a loss of time to shout at me. The captain made an imperious gesture to the cook, and turned his back to me. The other officers, somehow, smiled at the comical scene, and said nothing; and the cook, a good man, led me back to the kitchen, made me sit on a stool like a good mother, and put a plate full of good food in front of me, this time he himself laughing, and commenting:

“You are hungry, eh?” Those were the first words I understood, and I answered immediately:

“Yes, yes!” And I made him understand that he should fill the plate again. Which he did, always laughing. And I:

“Thank you! Thank you!”

With the hunger I had, that was all I remembered of the English Wilckens had taught me. With the hunger I had how could I remember the rest? When I showed him that my belly was full he took me to where the sailors were sleeping, and showed me an empty berth. And so I became one of the crew. Next day they put me to work with them, and gave me to eat what they ate. And during the twenty-five days that the trip lasted until I reached Tampico, in Mexico, where they went to reload the ship with oil, then to go back to England, the sailor who had brought me on board—pardon, who Wilckens and I had brought on board—never made a sign to me that he remembered that he was the cause of finding myself on the ship.

Those twenty-five days served me like twenty-five months of study of the English language, as nobody on the boat spoke any other language I was forced—with pleasure—to hurriedly study in order

to be able to talk with them. And it helped me also that in my little bundle I didn't forget to take along a grammar and a dictionary in English I had bought previously for taking the few lessons I had with Wilckens. And during the whole trip those were the only two books I read. When we reached Tampico, the captain, satisfied with me, instead of delivering me to the police, gave me a permit to disembark as if I were a member of the crew. I saved the price of the ticket for the trip, and he got the benefit of a working sailor who didn't cost him a penny.

I had very little money, and I didn't have any intention of establishing myself in Mexico. As I love rivers, I had a great desire to see the Rio Grande. (As a child, or almost, I had already read hundreds of short stories about Buffalo Bill, so I was also in love with Indians.) Therefore I went immediately to the railroad. Direction: Rio Grande. And after asking for the nearest point to it I saw that very few Mexican pesos would be left to me. And as there were no more trains that day, I decided to depart with the first train in the morning. So I took a cheap room in a hotel to pass the night, not wanting to take the risk of being robbed of the money for the ticket by some Mexican bandit, still common at the time. But after putting out the light and starting to sleep I felt a lot of things promenading over my body. I put on the light and I saw a... million cockroaches running in every direction, obviously for fear of losing their lives. They went to hide in a thousand places. Thinking that they were scared enough, and that they would not dare to show their faces again for the night, I put out the light again and tried to continue my interrupted sleep. I was wrong in my strategical calculations, and in a few seconds the army of cockroaches was back in full force. And I was convinced that I could not win that battle, without even a pistol. So I left the winning of a battle upon such ferocious enemies to the no less ferocious Mexican bandits and went to sleep on a bench in a little park nearby.

When I arrived at the Rio Grande it was still daylight, and since I could not pass it over the bridge, I penetrated the wood im-

mediately in order to be able to approach the river incognito, and see if I could pass it wading. I couldn't, because the damn river had water one yard higher than usual, and I didn't know how to swim.

Going up and down the river in search of a point where perhaps I could cross walking, with no danger of drowning, I discovered a family of Indians: father, mother, and three children... there lost in the woods. They were preparing their dinner: tortillas and peppers on charcoal's embers. Dinner of starving people, which they probably had every day. And yet, with real generosity these poor people invited me to partake of their dinner. I accepted with gratitude one of those poor tortillas of corn. They understood immediately that I was looking for that lost place, and the man informed me that the flood would last another five or six days before going down to normal to be able to cross in a certain place without swimming... if it didn't rain again. I showed him that the pesos I had left didn't amount to even three dollars, and therefore I could not wait, otherwise I would have arrived on the other side without a penny. Was he sure that there was no place where I could risk it even if dangerous?

“Well... there is a place that we call the Indian Passage, perhaps you could make it there, if the current is not too strong; but without knowing how to swim I would not try it, because if the current carries you away... without swimming you are finished.”

“Do you want to show me where this Indian Passage is? I cannot give you any money, but here are two shirts, two drawers and two pairs of socks. We divide them: half for you and half for me. If I get drowned you'll have something to remember me.”

“If you really want to take the risk...”

“Let's go. Goodbye *señora!* Goodbye *niños!*”

At about two hundred yards we arrived at the place we were looking for. At that point the river was about three blocks wide, and the current was really swift, and turbulent. The curvature that crossed the river could just be noticed by the waves that were crossing over it. And the water being turbulent, the bottom of the river could not

be seen. Perhaps due to the swollen river it seemed not well watched, I thought. And I was too impatient to wait so many days. I started to take off my clothes completely. I gave half the things to the Indian, and with what I had left I made a tight bundle around which I wrapped a couple of newspapers I had with me, making it solid with a string, and after thanking the Indian, I entered the water.

“*Amigo!*” the Indian said to me, “Before moving a foot be sure that the other is down solid, or the water is going to carry you away in deep water.”

“Goodbye, *amigo*. I’ll try my best. It is only my life I’m gambling!”

Not knowing how to swim, what I was trying to do seemed a little crazy, but from age ten to fourteen I must have read a hundred books of adventures in all parts of the world, including those of Jules Verne, and for an adventurous soul, the crazier the better, it seems.

So I started to advance, slowly. The current was really strong, and even before the water reached under my armpit I had difficulty keeping myself on the crest of the bottom of the “Indian way”, which I still noticed from the waves that the water was still making. And besides from the point I had started I had marked with my eyes the point of arrival on the other bank, and with each step I was making I made sure that I wouldn’t sink all of a sudden. And once in a while I would turn and look at the Indian, who lowered his head, approving what I was doing. When I had arrived in the middle of the river the water reached near my nose, and I always kept the bundle high over my head with one arm to save the clothes from getting wet, since I had to put them back on. I was beginning to hope that I would make it... without tragedy.

But all of a sudden a wave raised me up, and when I went down a few yards away the water went over my head.

“Ah, *amigo!*” I said, addressing myself. “Now don’t lose your head. You are too young, and life is too beautiful to say goodbye. In the company of fish do like the fish...” Everything passed in my mind

like lightning. And so I began to do what in the middle of the ocean I had seen the dolphins do. Going under, and then pushing up, enough to breathe before going down again, meanwhile always pushing myself toward the other bank. And after repeating that play I don't know how many times, I went down once more and discovered, with great joy, that my nose had remained outside of the water. Once more I had defeated that not so lovely lady with a sickle. I made a run out of the water, and from the shore I exchanged a gesture of greeting with the Indian. And prudently I disappeared in a large bush, while the Indian disappeared into his wood.

Everything seemed deserted and I wondered a little. Was it so easy to visit Buffalo Bill? Well hidden in the bush I opened the bundle and to my great surprise I found that by keeping the bundle over my head with my arm the water didn't have the chance to pass through that many sheets of newspaper. So I was able to put on my clothes immediately, without hardly getting wet in any part. While I was getting dressed I noticed a man on the Mexican side getting undressed, making a bundle like I did, and just swimming vigorously across the river, taking a fraction of the time that it took me. He landed about one hundred yards below me. But when in the open he had just started, hurriedly, to put on his pants, two American guards jumped out of the woods and surrounded him. He had brought two or three bottles, probably liquor, across, and that is what they grabbed. Now since the city was in my direction, and the bush in which I was hiding was isolated and they couldn't miss me, I knew that I would be discovered, and surely arrested. So I pretended to be somebody living in the city who had gone out for a walk, and for curiosity I approached to see what they were doing... innocently. It didn't work. Probably they had already spotted me, but they didn't show up immediately because they were waiting for that man with the liquor. So they started going toward the city and one of them made a gesture to me to follow them. So I had failed, after risking my life.

The city was more than a mile away. To me they had not said a word yet. When we left the river and took the road, still in the wood, with me following fifteen or twenty steps behind them, I was at the point of making a run into the wood at the risk of getting shot. But while I was searching for the best place to do it, one of them turns around and makes a gesture to me to get lost... I thought that it was a joke, and I make the same gesture to him as if asking: "Me... going?" "Yes!" He makes with his head. I started walking toward the wood, slowly, slowly, while keeping my eyes on him to see if he were going to pull out his gun. He had forgotten about me already, and he was arguing violently with the other man, probably trying to get their share of the bottles. I disappeared. So had my trick worked, or maybe they didn't want me as a witness in sharing the liquor?

That was not my problem. Well into the woods, I had to decide what to do in order not to fall again into their hands. By then darkness had arrived and the city in the distance could again be seen illuminated. The city being small I figured that it would be dangerous to go in. I could meet the two policemen again. So I decided to pass the night under the stars, also to give time for my clothing to dry completely. In the train, and after from the Indian, I had been informed of how things were after passing the river, and they had assured me that most of the surveillance was not near the river, which any good swimmer could cross any place at night time without being seen, but after passing the city, on the roads or in the fields it was necessary to pass through in order to reach safety twenty or thirty miles inside the country where the population was permanent. Therefore my choices were limited. Either on foot, crossing woods and fields, or to grab a taxi in the city by using half of my capital of no more than four dollars (with two dollars, twenty or more miles could be done at that time in a taxi). I decided on this second alternative, as presenting the lesser danger. Therefore, once decided, I slept peacefully under the beautiful starry sky.

Early in the morning, as soon as it got light—in the hope that the policemen would still be sleeping—I entered the center of

the city. In the square there were a dozen taxis, all driven by Mexicans. I thought that a good sign. For sure those won't spy on me, I thought. And in fact they didn't, but in my situation, without knowing it, they did worse. I approached one of them who was alone, while the other taxi men were gabbing together nearby, and in confidence I asked him how many miles he would take me in the direction of the large city a hundred miles away, for two dollars.

"Twenty miles" he answered. But then the other taxi men, having heard, rushed toward me, shouting:

"I take you twenty-two miles... twenty-three... twenty-five," shouted the others, while surrounding me. Probably they needed the two dollars for breakfast; obviously, I was the first customer to come along. That created some commotion, which attracted attention to me, and I realized that I had to get out of there fast.

"I changed my mind, I changed my mind. I'll take the train." And I tried to extricate myself from their circle, while they continued to shout, increasing the number of miles, and trying to hold me there, and I to get free. It was too late. Who did I see running toward us? The two policemen I had said goodbye to in the woods the day before. They just invited me to follow them and this time they escorted me among them... to make sure that I would not get lost. The taxi men remained there scratching their heads, puzzled. We didn't go far. The... hotel free of charge was right there... waiting for me. It was a small jail. I found seventeen men and a girl, all there for the same reason, I joining them in sharing the benefits of that lodging at the expense of the state. All the men, of a variety of nations of Europe, all in an iron cage occupying a good part of one floor. An iron cage which was divided in many cells, all in iron, with no doors, only the large one that enclosed the iron ones having one door, which was the one closed. The girl, who was Polish, occupying a small cell, and allowed to circulate during the day helping the jailor to distribute the food, while we were never allowed to get out of our iron cell, although the eighteen of us were allowed to circulate inside

of it, as I said, the small cells had no doors. And we seemed to be the only prisoners in that jail.

Not one of us was ever interrogated or tried. Our crime was only that of being uninvited guests; and we being all European, we were informed that a train every three months would pass from place to place all along the Mexican border picking up all those who were in our situation, transported to the nearest port, and deported to our nations at their own expense. Very kind of them not to do it at our expense, since we were mostly without funds. And it was certainly not with my four dollars capital in all that I could do it, later increased by twenty dollars that an uncle of mine who was working as a laborer on the railroads in St. Louis mailed me, although we had never met before, he many years before having married one of the many sisters of my mother, with a large family to support in Europe. And yet when he heard that I was in jail, he immediately sent me the twenty dollars, excusing himself that he could not send more, because he didn't have anymore. Our bad luck in jail was that we had arrived at the jail when the fatal train had just passed a few days before, and we had to wait for the train three months later.

In jail our food in reality was abundant. What we didn't like was that we had to divide it with a... million ferocious flies, they having had the first bite. Because that pig of a jailor used to kill a young goat and hang it out there in the sun of July in the yard all day to feed first the flies, which we could see with envy from our windows having the first bites. And that every day left us horrified. We informed the jailor a number of times that we would have preferred to eat the animal without the company of the flies, but he didn't pay any attention to a "bunch of foreigners", and continued to do what he pleased. He was wrong because in that way he was preparing a... storm.

There was another thing that contributed to that— without considering that in the jail had arrived a certain anarchistic wind which was shaking a little bit the peacefulness of the jail—and this

was that being the middle of summer, inside our iron cage the heat was like being in a boiler. I used to dip the towel in the cold water of the sink, tie it around my head, and in one hour the towel was dry. The others had to do the same. And never one single minute in the open with the passing of the weeks. And even this we protested with the chief jailor, who we had only seen once when we arrived, and never saw again, his helper doing all the work, with the help of the Polish girl, with whom we were very friendly... when the jailer was not around; she being the only one who could circulate freely. And she told me that the chief jailer had a daughter, very friendly with her.

That gave me an idea, the situation having become intolerable inside our cage. I convinced all the others that if we wanted the things changed, that with such a jailer we could only get them with a strike. And they agreed. But I knew that a strike would not be enough if outside they would not know about it.

So I decided to send a letter to the newspaper in San Antonio, informing them that we had started a strike, and the reasons for it. But how could we mail it to them, and make sure they would get it? I asked the Polish girl to inform the daughter of our intention to strike... against her father, for such and such reasons, of which she surely must already be informed that they really existed; and would she be so kind to help us in obtaining a correction of them, which were against all norms of hygiene, by mailing for us the letter to the paper? We would start the strike next day anyhow. The answer came immediately: she was willing. With my dictionary, in one hour the letter was ready, and I passed it to the Polish girl who was waiting for it, who passed it to the daughter, who so far we had not seen. Obviously she was a rebellious girl. She even paid for the stamp out of her own pocket.

We started the strike on Friday. In Saturday's paper there was no news of the strike. Didn't they get the letter, or didn't they want to publish it? The daughter herself let us know that she was disappointed. But Sunday came and there was the letter, with the news of

the hunger strike we had started two days before. Meanwhile sixteen of the eighteen men could not endure the hunger strike, and Sunday noon they took the meal. Only a Jewish fellow and I refused the meal, informing the jailer that we would continue it until the things would be changed. We were immediately separated from them, and the two of us put together in a small cell. And we continued the strike while the others were eating. What we had gained was that our small cell was nice and cool, although naturally we were also kept in. Now the Jewish fellow had a book of Jack London in Yiddish: *Martin Eden*, and I felt like reading it. In three days he taught me how to read Yiddish, and as at that time I knew German fluently, in three days I read it all and understood it. I was very pleased with myself. The tenth day, which was the following Sunday, we were brought to the office. A reporter of the San Antonio paper had arrived, who told us that the letter had raised a public scandal with the readers, and a great shame for the jailor, who naturally was furious, and wanted to know how we had succeeded in sending the letter to them, with the strict vigilance that he was keeping in the jail by the order of the government. His daughter was present behind him and gave half a smile to me, which I feigned not to see. If he only knew. After all, what did we want, he was almost desperate, seeing his job in danger.

“First, stop the flies from eating the meat that belongs to us.”

“Granted! I will keep the meat inside.”

“Second: one hour of walking in the yard each day.”

“And who is going to watch you, if my helper is most of the time out, and I am here alone?” he shouted, disconsolate. “Do you think I find pleasure in keeping you here, with all the work that you give me? I didn’t create these conditions. And besides now you don’t have long to remain here, because soon the train will come to take you where you will embark for your countries. And goodbye!”

We felt... sorry for the poor man in seeing him suffer so much... Aside the reporter told us that it would take a lot of time to obtain more from the prison authorities, even if they put pressure on

them, as were not regular criminals who have certain rights guaranteed by law... when that works. Therefore if we decided to continue the strike, now that we were near the time of the arrival of the train, that could delay our departure. So we decided to suspend the strike also, as the prospect at passing three more months there didn't smile at us. To sweeten the pill of surrender, the jailer added:

“And to demonstrate that I am not as hard as you think, during the day I will let the door of your cell open all day, and only close it at night.”

And so he did. Our little cell until the hour of sleeping was never closed, and during the day we were permitted to roam around inside, while the door of the large cell where all the other prisoners were confined remained closed; so once in a while we would go in front of their cell and tease them for being so foolish to have stopped the strike. “But, big jackasses,” we used to tell them, “why don't you start the strike again? We would help you.” But the idea of compromising their departure took their courage away. They had gotten used to being in the cage, like a human beast gets used to anything... thanks to his idiocy or... adaptability? This may be the secret of survival.

Finally the train came, reserved entirely for those who had violated the sacred borders. And they loaded us with many others, collected all along the Rio Grande, the line of separation between the two... friendly countries. Destination: New Orleans, where a boat was waiting to carry us to New York. We were not in handcuffs, and we were traveling in ordinary passenger cars, naturally watched. I was even tempted to jump overboard and try to reach the shore. A French guy who had also crossed the Rio Grande held me back, convincing me that the water over there was much deeper than in the Rio Grande, and that I had a good chance of drowning. Therefore: “it is better that you save your skin which will serve you in future adventures.”

In Ellis Island they only kept us for two days, and then, ironically, they sent us to discover Europe in a ship with the name of the

discoverer of America: *Cristoforo Colombo*. He had arrived voluntarily, and we departed involuntarily. We were about twenty all directed to Genoa, to be scattered to half a dozen nations; among them, I, a Lombard, and the Frenchman born in the province of Piedmont, Italy, although he considered himself French as his family emigrated to France when he was still a baby. But having stolen money in France while he was a cashier at Longchamps, he escaped to Mexico. There he became a *macro*—a pimp—and one day to defend his prostitute from the assault of a drunk who menaced her, he murdered him. Jailed, he escaped and was arrested when crossing the Rio Grande. In jail when told that he would be deported, he figured that he would risk less in being deported to Italy rather than France where jail was waiting for him for robbery. So he declared himself Italian. And he was being deported to Turin. The others were citizens of the Austrian Empire, and other Balkan countries. So we were all deported to Genoa, and from there each of us by train would go to our destiny. Mine to jail in Milan to begin to expiate my penalty for desertion from the army, which I had gloriously served for... three hours, against my will, learning to salute an imbecile of a corporal, who was screaming at me like a lunatic because I was not doing it in the proper military fashion.

At the speed that the boats were going at that time, the crossing of the Atlantic took about twelve days. Before going to Genoa the boat made a stop in Palermo to disembark some passengers, among them a couple of Sicilian deportees. The ship could not approach the quay, so it took a few hours in disembarking the passengers and goods. While the crew was busy doing this work I was conversing with the Frenchman in the quiet section of the boat. Below, in small boats, peddlers were going around offering the passengers up on our boat various products. And since I and the Frenchman were at that moment in an isolated place, away from the sight of officers and sailors, the idea of escaping from certain jail struck me as possible. So when one of those little boats came under us offering fruit, sure that nobody would hear me at that moment when everybody was watching

the passengers disembarking, I shouted to him that we wanted to see Palermo, but they didn't let us go out. How much did he want to take us ashore where nobody would see us? So he named his price. Five dollars, which at that time was quite a sum for a seller of fruit, who must have understood that we were not just passengers. The Frenchman, naturally, saw it also as his salvation. A rope was hanging down, strong enough for both of us to slide down together, and in less than a minute we were both in the vendor's boat, who in another five minutes put us ashore in an isolated spot, with nobody's suspicion. And as the price of five dollars he had quoted me was for one, for two he made it for seven dollars and fifty cents, which were worth more than all the fruit he was carrying, and the whole operation having taken less than ten minutes. He almost embraced us for joy. His children for sure that evening would have an extra plate of spaghetti, and we for the moment were free.

Where?... To France. The twenty dollars that my uncle had sent me in jail were practically intact, and the Frenchman was loaded, so he said, my twenty dollars being just enough to reach the frontier by train, or as near the frontier as possible. Where did he want to go? "Where you go," he told me, since he hardly spoke Italian, his family only speaking French. So we decided to rush to the railroad station and take the first train in that direction before they would discover that we were no longer in the boat. The station we could reach by walking, so we decided to avoid complications at the beginning. On the way we saw a beautiful girl coming toward us, and when she was at our side the Frenchman exclaimed with admiration, aloud:

"Quelle belle fille!" (What a beautiful girl!)

And we continued. After a little while I heard some noise behind us. I turn around and what do I see? At about a block behind us the girl, and a dozen men whom she had succeeded in assembling—probably her neighbors—running after us, furiously raising their fists toward us and shouting menaces. I understood immediately that we

were coming to the end of our adventure. Perhaps our lives! Rather shaken, I told the Frenchman.

“Turn around and see what a tempest you have raised with your: *quelle belle fille!* Meanwhile speed up.” He turned around and in seeing that threatening group pursuing us, he exclaimed, surprised: “But what did I say?” “Enough to be hanged... in Sicily.” “Ah! but... *quels sauvages!*” “Savage or not... let’s run! If we care for our life! As soon as I turn into that alley... follow me!”

We could hear behind us the enraged voices approaching, recruited certainly not with love, particularly that of the girl, joined by those of her troop, ready to avenge her honor, insulted by words she didn’t understand; and we trying to keep cool, walking, feigning indifference to the danger. But as soon as I had turned the corner into the alley I put fire under my heels, and the Frenchman did the same, flying away! Luckily that alley led into a series of other alleys, and in those we lost our pursuers, who must have lost time asking information about the direction in which we had disappeared. After what seemed a mile, and believing ourselves saved, we slowed down to breathe.

“And now?” asked the Frenchman?

“We can’t go to the station anymore, because they will suspect that, being strangers, it was there that we were going, and there they will search for us, to massacre us. And we have also to disappear from the city, because probably soon they will discover that we are not on the boat, and they will notify the police, and for sure; they will begin to hunt us. And therefore, do you see that carriage pulled by a horse? It is a taxi. My idea is to take it, and go to the first railroad station outside Palermo to take the train to Messina, and from there to Rome, where I will make a brief visit—now that I think—in search of information for crossing the frontier into France from an expert you don’t know, but who has a long career in crossing frontiers illegally to save himself.” It was Malatesta, whose name I didn’t have to mention to him, since I didn’t intend to take him along when I

visited him, as I didn't know how closely Malatesta was watched by the police, and two strangers would have looked suspicious to them.

The Frenchman agreed that it was the most prudent to take the train outside of Palermo, the first train that would come along, as we had to get away as soon as possible. Any train in any direction.

"Yes, let's take the taxi. It will be the horse that will run, while we rest from this race that has taken my breath away. And you are not in better condition."

The first train that came along took us to Messina, and by morning, Rome. It was still early, and I decided to visit Malatesta immediately, hoping that so early in the morning it was the safest, Malatesta being the editor of *Umanità Nova*, the anarchist daily. I left the Frenchman at some distance in the street, and cautiously I approached alone the paper's office. No policeman was in sight at that hour, although Malatesta told me that some of them were always around watching, although fascism would only come to power two months later. Malatesta was alone yet in the office, I explained to him rapidly my situation, also as a deserter.

"Ah! you can have years of jail on your shoulders, even if fascism is not yet in power," he said. "And you are right to escape to France where you say that at the moment you don't risk anything. And I will give you the address of a comrade near the border who this very night will take you over the mountains and leave you only when you are already in France."

"That is just the information I wanted to ask you about."

"And so from Buenos Aires, after a few months you find yourself here in Rome... ready to leave as soon as you have arrived."

"Ah! that is our life of wandering anarchists, isn't it? You also are used to it, like me."

"And how much money do you have?"

"Still about ten dollars."

"You are a little short to reach France," and he insisted on

giving me fifty lire. After embracing, we said goodby. We didn't speak longer than fifteen minutes. I was in a hurry to catch the train, and he had to prepare the next issue of the paper.

The comrade for whom he had given me a note, at 5 o'clock next morning left us in France. A few hours later we were in Monte Carlo, and by evening in Marseilles, on our way to Paris. After all that I and my comrades had done to bring him safely to France, the Frenchman insisted in paying the tickets for Paris for both. The train had to depart around midnight, and having arrived half an hour before, we were able to find good seats. All day long we ate something here and there, but no dinner, as we didn't want to waste time, and we were in a hurry to reach Paris, where he had his friends, and I, my comrades. As we had a long wait he told me to go to buy something to eat, while he was keeping our places. When I went back fifteen minutes later our places were occupied by two other people. I asked them what happened to the gentleman who was there, and they said that nobody was there when they came two or three minutes before. Thinking that he had changed places, I went up and down the whole train in search of him and I didn't find him anyplace, continuing the search even during the trip. Disappeared! What had happened to him I could not imagine. Did he disappear voluntarily, and remain in Marseilles thinking that he would be safer? In this case why didn't he tell me? It would have been understandable since his main danger was in Paris. Or had he been arrested? I could only speculate. The fact is that I never saw him again.

I arrived in Paris with exactly 35 cents in my pockets. But that was no problem, because from the station I walked to the house of the comrade who had received me on my arrival from Berlin, and I knew that in case of needing a meal I could always find food in his, and his young wife's house. She was also an anarchist. From him I got the necessary information about the chance of finding a job, because I told him that my pockets were empty.

“Work is scarce, but you don't have to worry, as you know

that you can live here until you find one."

"My friends, thanks, but you know that I like to be independent, and in the matter of making a living I like to depend on no one, and therefore I am always ready to take, temporarily, any kind of work, until I find what I prefer."

"Then... to satisfy your desire... I tell you where you can find a... good job immediately, which is out in the fresh air which you love so much." And he laughed.

"What is so funny about this job? Where is it?"

"On the roofs of Paris." And more laughs. To which his wife joined.

"Let's have it, will you?"

"Well... in the shop of a... chimney-sweeper. He is afraid to go up on the sloping roofs for fear of sliding down to the street from way way up. But surely a job so safe and... clean like that—you don't want it." And he continued to laugh.

"Give me the address!" And I became a chimney-sweeper up there on the roofs of Paris, on naked feet most of the time in order to get a good grip on the wet roof tiles, so that I would not slide down to the street, many times being forced to tie myself with a rope to some chimney, particularly when the winter came and the tiles got frozen; up there pulling up and down the rope to which the rasper was attached, the boss, him, being in the apartment below helping me pull up and down, he, with his fear, being the one who was getting all the soot on his head, while I only had to take care that I wouldn't be picked up from the street... as a corpse. And I did that... beautiful job for more than three months, until down came a foot of snow and put an end to my career as a chimney-sweep. It had become too dangerous, but I had put aside enough to enjoy the luxury of a vacation. And I didn't go back anymore when spring came, and therefore a new... profession wasted in the many I did in my life in order to fill my belly.

A few days after my arrival in Paris, Bruzzi told me:

“Do you know who always asks me about you?” And I saw a malicious smile in his joker eyes.

“Who?”

“Maria!”

“Maria... Rascon?... In Paris?... I saw her last in Barcelona. Let’s go right now to see her!” I only knew one Maria, whose thought alone made my heart throb. As the reader perhaps remembers, she was the one who saved me from the police after just two weeks in Barcelona, Mantovani and I. And although for special reasons we couldn’t meet often enough to start an amorous liaison in the brief period I was in hiding in Barcelona, still when away very often she had been in my mind, as an ideal companion. I remembered that day when we were alone in her room and she confessed to me that from the sentimental side, with her lover, not all was rosy in her life. Some time before she had begun an amorous relationship with a member of the CNT, but soon she realized she had committed a grave error, because little was common between them, and now she didn’t know how to get free of him, because he was desperately in love with her, and he threatened to jump out of the window of their room and kill himself if she left him. Naturally he was not an anarchist, otherwise he should have known that an anarchist is one no longer, if in the name of no matter which excuse he tyrannizes another human being, even if in the name of love. Her confession was interrupted by the arrival of the French comrades, also deserters, with whom she was living, and learning from them the trade of dressmaker; and the same day the comrades had found a safer hiding place for me in Barcelona, and that ended our confidences. In the more than two months that followed before my departure for Argentina, we met a few times on Sundays, when the weather was beautiful, safely up there in a small garden on the slope of the Montjuïc mountain belonging to the comrade we first met at our arrival, where he cultivated some vegetables, and where a group of comrades used to meet; because from up there we could see all around if the police was coming, and we had time to disappear. But up there,

being always together in a group, for the closeness of the place, Maria and I did not have anymore the possibility of talking confidentially of personal problems. Then I left suddenly and I didn't have the chance to say goodby to anybody, and each of us went his or her way, without any news of one another.

So in entering her hotel room by surprise, Maria, who was alone, threw herself in my arms, kissing me with joy... and I her, from her lips hearing later on during the night that her companion really did jump out of the window of their room, when she told him that everything was finished between them, and that she wanted to separate, definitively. Luckily there in Paris the window was only one floor up and he didn't kill himself. Finally, a few days before, she convinced him to go back to Barcelona, alone, because it was the end, while she remained in Paris; or she would go back to Barcelona, if he didn't follow her. He agreed to go to Barcelona where he could get a sure job. And this time she thought that it was goodby for ever.

Now those arms around my neck, and that warm body near mine put a certain vibration in me... After all, more than five months had passed since I made my nocturnal trip on naked feet to go to hold in my arms the beautiful body of a woman, and receive the last joys in Buenos Aires. Once Bruzzi had departed, because he had to meet his charming Viennese he had brought from Vienna a few months before, and with whom he was living as man and wife—without marriage, naturally, anarchist style, which is as good or better than any other marriages—Maria and I decided that two years of separation had entitled us to our first night of love, since she finally was free.

But she was wrong. Early next morning, when we peacefully were resting from our nocturnal labor, we heard knocking at the door.

“That's him!” whispered my love. But this time she had assured her independence by taking the key to the room away from him. So he could not come in and surprise her in my arms. Which might have caused something dramatic from the hands of a furious Othello. He had just arrived back from Barcelona and since Maria

refused to open the door, he had taken refuge for the moment in the room of other friends in the hotel.

“And there he is again,” continued Maria. “Every time that we separate and he departs, a few days later he is back again. But this time he remains out.” And after a few calls of “Maria! Maria!” we heard him going away. “Since I refused to open he’ll be back in one hour from those comrades living upstairs. He knows that at this hour I must be in and refused to answer. This comedy has happened before. So we have to be patient. I don’t want to have a tragedy on my conscience.”

“Then, what are we going to do, my love?” “That means that I’m not yet free. That lunatic is capable of any folly. Somebody who jumps out of the window when you tell him that it is finished between us, is capable of repeating the same thing from a higher floor and really killing himself. And imagine how we would feel both of us in beginning a relationship with a corpse between us. We have to give him time to recover from his lunacy, and meanwhile see each other in secret until I really can get free from him without causing a tragedy.”

And so we did, but it was not easy for either of us, our free time rarely combining to give us a chance to meet: she sometimes having to get up at 5 o’clock to come to pass an hour with me before going to work, when he had gone to his job earlier. And to do that she had to cross half of Paris to come to my room. And naturally she began to suffer in her health, and rather than getting sick we thought that it was better that she should pass some months with her parents in Andalucía, alone, with the excuse that she had to take care of her sick mother, who was enjoying perfect health in her home in Andalucía. To see also if by living apart, he in Paris and she in Andalucía he would get cured of his romantic sickness; and then we would be free to live together. And she departed.

But after two months I got from Barcelona a telegram from her which said:

“Come immediately. Urgent!” And she continued by explaining to take a certain train for Barcelona, that at my arrival she would

Maria and Mussolini

be waiting for me. But when in the morning I was ready to depart for the station to catch the indicated train, I received a second telegram from her, in which she said:

“Don’t move! Too late. I’ll explain everything when I see you in Paris.”

What had happened that was so mysterious? A month later Maria was back in Paris... after a visit to Rome, explaining that she had invited me to rush to Barcelona to accompany her and somebody else to Rome, in the first telegram, but that in the second telegram she cancelled the invitation to go there, because she had to depart suddenly leaving me no time to arrive in Barcelona before her departure by boat, for Genoa, Italy, on her way to Roma, for a visit to... Mussolini.

Here is what had happened. The war between the *pistoleros* hired by the capitalists and the police to assassinate anarchists, and the *pistoleros* that the anarchists had to organize against the other *pistoleros* in order to survive, by defending themselves against their treacherous attacks, in order not to let themselves be assassinated with impunity, was still going on, with more than two hundred killed on each side, if I remember the number well. And since now as many died on the other side as there were anarchists assassinated, the capitalists, as many of them now had to pay also with their own lives, found that it was costing them too dear. So they decided to change tactics, and try to repeat in Barcelona what Mussolini had already done in Italy, where he had already succeeded in seizing power. Therefore they decided to send to Rome the leader of their *pistoleros* to interview Mussolini, in order to learn from him how to implant the same fascistic regime in Barcelona, and then in Spain.

But at the CNT, by subterranean ways, found out that such a plot was in preparation, and they wanted to discover the inside of it. And Maria had arrived just in time in Barcelona from her home in Andalucía, on her way to Paris. Beautiful, and knowing by previous activities that she was fearless, they asked her if she was willing to take the risk of going in the same boat for Genoa in which the “other”

was going, and pretend to fall in love with him during the trip in a boat from Barcelona to Genoa, in order to find out what he would plot in Rome with Mussolini. And Maria was no anarchist to refuse such adventure. Two armed comrades went with her as escort-guardians by order of her father and mother in order to protect her from the dangers of the trip; she passing for the daughter of a rich capitalist, who the comrades knew had daughters. And one of the two "guardians" had to be me, the advantage being also that I knew Italian. And that was the reason of the first telegram. But then the guy advanced his departure, and there was no more time for me to reach Barcelona before the departure of the boat for Genoa, and they had to send me the second telegram, and another comrade had to substitute for the guardian of that innocent girl, who for the first time was visiting a foreign country without the protection of her father and mother.

The plan they had prepared was really brilliant. She was traveling as the daughter of a great industrialist, as I have mentioned, and to appear as such, the women comrades who had some jewels of value—rings, bracelets, earrings, watches, collars—lent them to Maria so that she would wear them to impress the guy. And having also found a beautiful dress, Maria was ready to... kill any amateur Don Juan, and make him surrender to her will. And the two comrades had to protect not only her, but also the treasure in jewels she was wearing, in order not to ruin the owners. And before they arrived in Genoa on their way to Rome the bird was in Maria's net, he as a real *caballero* having offered also his protection to her from the perils she might encounter in that foreign country. Naturally Maria being the major asset to be protected, and besides... the capital that her capitalist father must possess. What a conquest! Too bad that the fortress was protected by those dogs of guardians, who by order of her parents she had to take along everywhere (so must have thought the *caballero* who probably had many murders of comrades on his conscience).

Naturally having become such good friends, he didn't hesitate to invite them to visit Rome first of all, where he had a very important

Maria and Mussolini

mission to carry out, promising that after accomplishing that, he would put all his time at her service for the rest of her trip, although he was urgently needed in Barcelona. Appreciating the sacrifice he was willing to make for her “protection”, she accepted. Everything was running smoothly as they had planned. Therefore when they arrived in Rome, he took care—with the help of a gentleman who was waiting at the station for him—to find three rooms on the same floor in the hotel, one for him, one for the *señorita*, and one for the guardians. They had become almost like one single family, in this way making it easy for Maria and the two comrades to carry out their work of following him and see where he was going, with whom he spoke, what he was arranging, and finding out whom he was meeting, besides the meeting with Mussolini. And for everything he was doing writing letters to Barcelona informing them of his accomplishments. It didn’t take long for Maria to discover the address where he was sending his letters with the information; and after a few days, and before something would go wrong and they would be discovered for what they were, they understood that they had to disappear before the secret police of Mussolini would discover the game they were playing. So suddenly Maria was taken with a great desire to see Florence immediately, with great regret on his part that he had not yet fully accomplished his mission. But he promised that when he would return to Barcelona he would consider it a great honor to be able to visit the lovely *señorita*.

They rushed back to Barcelona by the quickest way, having already written to the comrades the address to which he was sending the letters with the information of his accords in Rome with Mussolini; then adding verbally all the other information they could not entrust in the letters. Comrades of the CNT in the post office took care to pick up the letters he was sending, and deliver them, not to whom they were addressed, but to the hands of the comrades of the CNT; Maria, the same day of her arrival, departed for Paris. Otherwise who knows what hunt they would have given for her in Barcelona when at his arrival he would find out that he had been tricked. Particularly that as

soon as the comrades found out that he had arrived in Barcelona, and no more letters were there to be picked up, they started to publish the letters in our newspaper revealing the fascist plot that they were preparing. And he was lucky, because if I had been of the company, perhaps with the help of our Roman comrades his stay in Rome might have been more tempestuous.

I have to mention that it was after two months of my return to Paris that Mussolini grabbed power, while I was scraping the chimneys of Paris. If I had not escaped in Palermo from the boat, and waited to fall in the arms of the carabinieri in Genoa, what would have happened to my life? Would I be still here, years later, to tell of the joys, pains, and loves of the life of a crusader for freedom?

In Paris I found the anarchist movement prospering again. The comrades who had been freed were continuing our propaganda with enthusiasm, unchanged, in their papers. Lectures were numerous, and as is the style, particularly in Paris, public political and religious debates with adversaries of anarchism were taking place, with comrades like Sébastien Faure and others, who would easily draw a thousand people. I recall a lecture by Han Ryner, who had been proclaimed the prince of raconteurs, on Tolstoy. Ghezzi (my companion in desertion, who was killed in 1948 by Stalin in one of his Gulags, simply for wanting to escape from totalitarian Russia), Lily, her photographer companion (with whom I also made a living for about three months taking pictures mostly of girls in the street, and selling the photos to them), and I—we four organized it in the huge hall of the Société Savarites. The place was full, the crowd overflowing even into the street, Han Ryner being known in all of Paris as one of the greatest speakers, also an anarchist, and author of many books. The anarchists were known then widely and respected in the intellectual world.

And now, with fascism in power, the flood of anarchists escaping from Italy increased still more the anarchist Italian colony in Paris,

with the continuous arrival of new comrades. Anarchists who in spite of all the persecutions and expulsions from France by the police (generally into Belgium, from where the same comrades would reenter again into France, and if caught, be expelled again, sometimes ending in jail for short periods) had found in Paris a kind of second fatherland for almost a full generation. Later, with the starting of the Spanish Civil War, many Italian anarchist volunteers came from here to fight in the anarchist column on the front of Aragón, some of them remaining to the end of the Civil War.

I, following my theory that in order to learn a language well and quickly in a foreign country it is necessary to become immediately a part of the movement of that country, joined the activities of the French movement. It was composed of two tendencies: individualist and communist anarchists. I came to know many comrades, men and women of whom I preserve dear memories, in spite of the fact that I don't remember anymore at this distance their names; and yet their images are still clear in my mind, their houses being like my house, having become so close.

But after two years the spirit of adventure moved me again, and I became restless. It was time to go on the roads of the world. This time I departed with two comrades, the three musketeers, without swords, for Cuba (as a transit point) again in search of Buffalo Bill. We were decided to have that encounter, by any means that came along. Of the three I was the only one who spoke Spanish. On the boat to Cuba we came to know three Sicilian youth, two simple and congenial, the other rather mysterious, a cousin of the other two. He seemed to be running away from something, but we never asked him why. It wasn't our business. And naturally as the only Italians in the boat we became friendly. To our surprise, in order to disembark in Havana it was required to have a certain sum of money, and not have glaucoma, a malady of the eyes, a hardening of the eyeball. Not all of us had that sum, but by passing what we had from one to the other,

we six Italians succeeded in passing the inspection. But the mysterious one was detained to be sent back to Italy because of his eye sickness, the French company refusing to take him back. The youth was terrorized, particularly since he did not have much money, although he said that he had brothers in America who would send him the money he needed. They put him in jail to be deported while waiting for a boat that would go to Italy. The cousins notified his brothers by telegraph of the need for money, and by the same means immediately came two hundred dollars to the bank, in the name of the one in jail, who was not free to collect. Crying, the two cousins begged me to help them get the money, being the only one who knew Spanish. I felt sorry for the three of them, so I had to assume the name of their cousin, and in the company of one of the two cousins, at my risk and danger, as it is said, we went to the bank and succeeded in collecting the two hundred dollars. A sum at that time which commanded respect. So now we had a nice sum with which to maneuver in trying to have the cousin released in spite of the eye sickness.

Knowing the corruption that exists in all governmental institutions, I offered to present myself at the jail with the two hundred dollars—at that time the dollar and the Cuban peso were interchangeable—and see what I could do to have him freed. At the jail, being a case of sickness, I was told that his freedom depended on the doctor, who alone could give the order of release. Otherwise, deportation. I went to see the doctor, using all kind of arguments to have our friend released. Impossible, he repeated, with his kind of sickness. It was contagious and extremely dangerous for the health of the Cuban population...

And now it was a question of taking the risk of being accused of an attempt to corrupt an honest and faithful representative of the State... But I was sorry for the guy in jail, and in spite of his dangerous sickness, he had to live in some part of the world... like those who had tuberculosis, syphilis, etc. which at that time were still the curse of humanity. So?

I was sitting near the doctor, and the drawer of his desk was

open. And while I was pleading the cause of the cousin, with an indifferent air I took out my pocket-book and let drop a ten dollar bill into it. He was following my hand... but silence! I continued to plead and let drop a second ten dollar bill into the open drawer, and the silence continued, then a third, and a fourth, and still following my hand with his greedy eyes, but silence... But when I dropped the fifth ten dollar bill, he sharply shut the drawer. It was the price of his honor! Without saying a word he wrote out a note denying that the friend had such sickness, and therefore it didn't constitute a danger for the health of the Cuban people. And in reading the note the jailer, with a smile, opened the door of the jail and our friend gained his freedom. Surely the jailer would receive his share of the fifty dollars.

The six of us were all sleeping in a large room, each in his own bed, and it was a great joy for all. And now it was a question of visiting Buffalo Bill. It wasn't easy, because in Havana there must have been another hundred people with the same desire. I got immediately in contact with the Cuban comrades, who were publishing a weekly, in search of information about what we were interested in, and they warned us that Havana was the most difficult place to succeed, being the most controlled; and that it would have been better for us to go to some small port, particularly one that soon had to start the *zafra*, that is the collection of the sugar cane, and then there would be many cargo ships which would go to those small ports to load bags of raw sugar to be carried to the country of Buffalo Bill.

But when I brought this news to the other five Italians a big surprise was awaiting me. While I was talking with the Cuban comrades, to which meeting they didn't want to come because they didn't understand Spanish, they decided to go around town themselves also in search of some means to achieve our aim. Naturally while speaking softly, Italian... shouting, Italian style, they drew the attention to themselves, of honest (and not too honest) people, who understood that my friends were certainly not there in Havana to look for work,

particularly since Italian emigrants in Cuba at that time were a rarity. They were therefore fish that any cunning trickster could catch, it not being difficult to understand what they were seeking in Havana. And fished they were by a “doctor”, who probably never handled a drug, who approached them and made them understand that if their desire was to go to the country of Buffalo Bill, and they couldn’t, he had a secret way of getting a visa for them, from the proper authorities of that country to enter legally... at the price of one hundred fifty dollars each. And my friends fell into the trap, and for fear of losing such a marvelous opportunity they gave him the one hundred fifty dollars each, and their passports. And to complete the deal, the “cousin” who I had saved from deportation, in gratitude for the risk I had taken for him, informed by the others that I didn’t have so much money, he having received more money from his brothers in the States, generously gave the “doctor” also one hundred fifty dollars for me. And all exulting with joy they informed me that now all our problems were resolved, and that I, only, had to give the “doctor” my passport and in no time we would all be where we wanted to go. I immediately suspected a swindle, having more experience than them:

“But—great donkeys!” I shouted at them. “How could you be so stupid to give nine hundred dollars to somebody you just met in the street, who you could hardly understand, as you do not know a word of Spanish, and as you say he does not know a word of Italian? And besides give him your passports?” And turning to the “cousin”: “And this does not exclude that I thank you very much for the one hundred fifty dollars that you gave for me.”

“But he is a doctor!” they all exclaimed to excuse themselves, “And he even showed us where he lives.”

“Let’s go immediately to visit him. I don’t trust ‘doctors’ who in this country are as abundant as *cavaleri* in Italy, which doesn’t mean a thing. If you trusted him, first, you should have given him an advance on the sum, and when he would deliver the passports all completed pay the rest.”

We found him at home... but the money he had already put it in "safety", ready, he said, to pay whomever was going to do the job at the consulate.

"But 'doctor', " I asked him, "what means do you have to obtain the visas for us when the quota was closed?"

He knew somebody at the consulate, naturally paying him underhand a part of the sum, which he then had to divide with somebody else. (A thing possible... if it was true.)

"And how long it would take for the job?"

"A few days. A week, maximum."

A thing also possible, but it sounded false. Who knows how many times he had played that game before? We could not get any more specific promises, and if I had met him in the street before I would not have trusted him with a penny. But now he already had the money, and worse still the five passports, leaving all of my friends without valid documentation in Havana. When we were in the street I told them all my doubts. Did they want to risk all those dollars? The passports were not in danger since they would not have served for anything to the "doctor". But the nine hundred dollars, well?... Since at the moment they didn't see any other possibility, they were willing to risk the money. And since they had given him also the one hundred fifty dollars for me, I also gave him my passport to see what would come out.

And one week passed, then two, and three, and four, and each time we went to see him, either we didn't see him in his place for a few days, or he didn't lack excuses. He was trying to get us tired of waiting, hoping that something would happen to us that would force us to leave. At last I succeeded in convincing them that we were swindled. And now it was a question of regaining the passports, and if possible also the money, which I doubted. The guy was playing the game too well, which meant that he had plenty of experience. And we never saw a sick client in his clinic, and it all appeared to be a set-up.

Therefore one day, after making sure that he was home, the six of us surprised him there. We closed the door and told him that

we wanted the passports and the money... or we'd cut his throat. Naturally we didn't really mean that, but we looked so serious and threatening that he got scared. He became deadly pale, trembling like a leaf. From a drawer he pulled out the six passports. Rapidly I looked through them and there wasn't a sign that anything had been done on them. I showed the passports to the others, to convince them still more that he was a thief.

"Here you have proof that he is a swindler!" And I was so furious for the farce that he had played on us that I slapped him violently, and grabbing him by the stomach I shook him up.

"And now, *el dinero... hijo de puta!*" A language which I have never used once in my life, since I refuse to use vulgar words, in any circumstances, and in any language. Not even in Italian.

"The money is in the bank," he excused himself. "I will go to get it tomorrow, since now the bank is closed."

"Tomorrow we'll wait for you at the bank. Which bank? And it had better be the real one."

He told it to us, and we left him. And since we suspected that he would withdraw the money and then disappear, we took our measures. Four of us would place themselves around the house, hiding, and then follow him wherever he went, while another comrade and I would go at the bank half an hour before it opened and follow him when he went inside to take out the nine hundred dollars in order not to give him a chance to run away. With nine hundred dollars he could take a vacation for a few months, instead of giving them back to us.

The other four comrades didn't see him coming out of his house, while the other comrade and I, when we arrived in front of the door of the bank, which was still closed, saw him coming out from a side door. We were only a few steps away, and he also saw us. He started to run away, but we were younger and went in pursuit and succeeded in grabbing him. Then he began to shout with all his voice:

"*Bandidos! Bandidos!*" and fighting in trying to get loose from us.

“*El bandido eres tú! El dinero! El dinero!*” And we pinned him down to the ground. And all of a sudden we were grabbed from behind by many hands which immobilized us. They were policemen who came running out of the bank, a trap nicely set up for us.

The police, naturally, arrested us, and began to pull us toward the police station which was not far, the “doctor” coming along as if he was the master of Havana, and the policemen treating him like the best of friends. It began to worry me, because I couldn’t figure out what kind of plot he had hatched to act as if he owned the city and its representatives. The thing became clear to me when inside the police station in meeting the chief of police he almost embraced him, shouting:

“These are two of the six bandits who assaulted me yesterday in my house, and I came here to denounce them, and the newspapers are writing about them today.”

It was a revelation to me. In fact in the hurry to go to the bank I didn’t buy the newspaper of the city, which said:

“6 BANDIDOS ARMADOS ASALTAN A UN DOCTOR EN SU CASA POR ROBARLO”

A thought flashed through my mind: “But this crook swindles in combination with the police?” Then we are cooked! We have no proof that he is a crook, except our word against his, and that of the police. And our words are not enough. Then I remembered Ferrara, and exclaimed:

“Ah!!! Now I understand why thieves like this swindle poor people like us! We are going to tell it to... Ferrara!”

The commissar was exulting with pleasure while he was looking at us like a great conquest; but at the name of Ferrara the smile froze on his face. We had him in our pockets. Ferrara was an Italian who in his youth had come to Cuba to fight for its independence from Spain. And then he had established himself in Cuba. A man of great honesty and respected by everybody. He had even been vice president of the republic, and he was not elected president

because Cuba has a law which requires that the president must be native born. And now he was publishing a daily, while practicing law. And what a lawyer! I had visited him before to consult him about what had happened to us, and make his acquaintance, as my Cuban comrades had spoken to me of him with great respect.

At the name of Ferrara, and the menace implied in my words, the attitude of the commissar changed entirely. He threw a furious look at the “doctor”, and almost pushed us out of the station.

“Go, go! It has been an error!” And he sat at his table as if we were no longer present. We didn’t wait for him to repeat that we could go. We went first to Ferrara to tell him of the adventure, and he told us that we could forget about the money because the “doctor” would disappear, and the police would say that they wouldn’t find him, until you disappear. It is an old story. After thanking him for being instrumental in perhaps saving us from years of jail as “bandits”, which we had no way of proving that we were not, since we actually had gone to the doctor threatening to cut his throat if he didn’t return our stolen money, we went to the daily which had published the longest article on the “bandits”, informing them that we were two of them, and that they should inform the police. After doing that, the director, all red for shame, we suppose, excused himself for having been wrongly informed, promising that they would publish a denial. Which they did... in six lines, the next day, in a corner of the paper where nobody would notice it, while the article about the “bandits” was in large characters on the first page. That was for the honesty of a certain press. But the honor of the paper was saved, and the hell with those foreigners! Why did they come here to disturb the Cuban paradise? Let them stay in their own country... unless they come here to risk getting butchered in helping them to get free of their oppressors. Like Ferrara.

Now that we had ended that adventure I told the company that I didn’t intend to lose any more time in Havana, and that with the less than fifty dollars I still had, I intended to go to other ports to seek the way to visit the country of the Redskins. Did any of them

want to try this other way with me? They all refused, including the two comrades, and only the “cousin” who had risked going with me to the bank decided to come. And so we said goodby, with wishes to meet in New York.

We departed early in the morning, and by evening we were already hiding near the chain of the anchor of a German boat which was loading sugar. Destination: New Orleans. Informed that the small boat which was taking in thousands of sacks of sugar would go to that port—we didn’t care which port as long as we could put our foot safely in a sure place—for a couple of hours we sat in an isolated part of the quay in order to figure out how we could go aboard without being seen. Impossible! There was the danger that they could, suddenly, bury us under a load of bags of sugar. We were forced to ask somebody on board to hide us, who would also be in a position to bring us something to eat during the four days the boat would take to reach New Orleans. So how much could we afford to pay? I had thirty-five dollars, remaining, and he had one hundred sixty-five. The maximum we could give was one hundred thirty or forty. We were thinking that in arriving in New Orleans one of us at least had to have enough money to reach New York where he had relatives, and I my comrades. We decided to try there in that port, even if we had to pay some sailor, or any change of port our money would have been diminished still further, and we might be forced to look for a job loading bags of sugar which are more than two hundred pounds each in weight, to replenish our fund, and we were not used to that kind of a killing job. Which had been my plan, if I had departed alone.

Now, as the crew only spoke German, my knowledge of the language came in handy. I entered alone on the boat, and feigning that I was looking for a job, I went to the officer who was watching me. Naturally he told me that he could not engage me because the local people were doing that. And besides they were almost through, and they were leaving the same evening. Then I suggested to him that

he should also load me and my friend. And I pointed to him sitting there on the quay.

“We don’t have beds for passengers.”

“Without beds,” I suggested with a smile. “We are adventurous people.”

“It is too risky!... One hundred dollars each.”

“We only have thirty each.”

“Seventy five... minimum.”

“With great sacrifice... Forty the maximum.”

“Fifty, the last price... being forced to divide them with the other officers.”

“It is agreed... When do we come on board?”

“As soon as it gets dark... and the crew is away eating.”

And at 7 o’clock we were hiding in our den... with the recommendation not to let ourselves be buried under tons of iron chain when they would raise the anchor. The trip passed without incidents, except the third night, when I was surprised on the deck in the dark where I had gone to get some fresh air. But I didn’t worry because now they would have to put us ashore in New Orleans or take us back to Cuba, with all the money still in our packet, if they returned there, or take us to Germany. I saw a sailor who spotted me in the darkness running to notify his superior, I suppose, but we never saw him again. And the officer who was bringing us food never mentioned the incident to me. And a few hours before we had to debark he brought us with what to shave, a mirror, and a big pot of chocolate, and biscuits. Only after we were outside the port in a café, did we give him the hundred dollars, with thanks on both sides. I asked him where were they going next trip, and he said again to Cuba to load more sugar. For New York on that trip then return to Germany. But not at the same port in Cuba.

In New Orleans by chance I had the address of a comrade that I got in Paris, with others in New York, and other cities with

ports. I went to see him immediately, since with a taxi he was near. We found him home. He was a sculptor and he was working for a firm creating saints, virgins, and Christs for the cemetery. A poorly paid job for an artist. As we had about sixty-five dollars left and the train for New York was close to fifty for almost two days and nights of traveling, I advised my friend to go right away to New York, that I would search for a temporary job in New Orleans until I heard from him.

“As soon as I arrive in New York I will ask my brother for fifty dollars and I will send them to you by telegraph.”

“But remember that those will be a loan. Now we are here and each of us has to take care of himself.”

The friend was a man of his word. The third day the telegram with the fifty dollars arrived, and I also departed for New York. But sure that he would keep his word, while I was waiting I got the idea to do something for those who had remained in Cuba. At my risk I went back to the port, I passed the guards, and got on board our boat which was still discharging the sugar. As soon as the officer saw me he got a little frightened. He came near and pulled me aside.

“What are you doing here? What do you want? It is dangerous!”

“I know. Let’s go down. I want to speak to you... about something bigger.” And once we were away from any indiscrete ears I proposed to him:

“When you are back in Cuba you would do me a great favor if you go to the address that I’m going to give to you, and bring my friends to New York safely, like you have brought us so well to New Orleans. Do you want to do it? They will give you also fifty dollars each.”

“I would have the time to go to Havana, because we would remain at least three days in Cuba loading, but I would have to find a very good excuse to go to Havana.”

“Here is the address. It is in Italian, but it says this: The bearer of this note is a most trustworthy person. Go with him. Payment of

fifty dollars each at your arrival. I'll see you, etc.—”

In less than twenty days they also arrived in New York where I was. But only two comrades arrived, because the two “cousins”, having become impatient, had already taken another boat in Havana; and when they arrived in New York in the search they were discovered and arrested, then deported to Italy, causing great pain to the new friends in whose apartment I was also living. The two comrades, instead, like us, were in the country of Buffalo Bill. And now I had to find a job in order to earn the money to have Maria join me, she having remained in Paris.

In order to economize and be able to save the money more speedily for Maria to come to join me, my friends proposed that I remain with them in the apartment of three cold flat rooms in which most of the working people at that time were living. And since they were three, and with me four, the rent of fifteen dollars a month cost us less than four dollars each a month. Practically nothing. And from the second day of my arrival I started to work as a lather, which was the profession I always fell back to in emergency situations, although I have always hated to work closed up in a factory. The maximum pay for a qualified workingman in mechanical industry was 75 cents an hour. As a new arrival they began to pay me immediately 70 cents an hour, in spite of the fact that I only spoke a few words of English. So the pay came to 28 dollars a week. And of this I practically saved half each week. It was a great luck for me to be living with my friends. If we consider that in Paris a good worker only earned 3.50 francs an hour, and it took 20 francs for a dollar, in New York I was making almost four times what I had earned in Paris. And it was the first time in my life that I had lived in an apartment of three rooms.

Unhappily the apartment in which we were living on the first floor was what was called a railroad apartment, and had only the window looking on the street for ventilation. I was sleeping in the third small room where the friends used to keep their things. And since

the expense was so little, I didn't give a thought about the air since I wanted to save dollars as fast as I could, love having its call.

The first day of my arrival, tired as I was, I went to bed early, the light of their room serving for me to get undressed, they also going to sleep early as they were working as laborers in construction; very heavy work. I fell asleep immediately. I did not know how long I was sleeping when I felt a warm breath on my face that woke me up suddenly. Opening my eyes in the darkness I seemed to see the figure of a... monster moving over me. I shouted and jumped out of bed, and the three friends did the same, turning on the light and running to me thinking that I had fallen from the bed and broken my bones. Then I saw that the... monster was the head of a horse, alive, who seemed to be looking at me also frightened by my shout. The horse was my neighbor living in a stable with other horses on the other side of the wall, and communicating with me through a little window that I in the darkness had not noticed when I went to bed; and now he had put his head through the window, probably to greet me as his neighbor, the new friends having forgotten to tell me. We all started to laugh, while my new friend the horse was raising his big head up and down as a greeting. I put a kiss on his snout, then I pushed his head to the other side.

“Go to your home,” I told him. “It is time to sleep. I'll greet you tomorrow after I have slept.

We became good friends. And when I left three months afterwards I almost cried. An evening never passed that before going to sleep I wouldn't pass my hand on the other side to caress his head, and he, after a minute, before I would fall asleep, responding by passing his big head through the little window to lick my face. It was reciprocal love without fury nor violence.

About three months later comrade de Russi, a man of infinite generosity, brought me the news that a friend was leaving a three room apartment—naturally a cold flat—abandoning in it bed, table,

chairs, and most of the things for the kitchen. If I wanted I could inherit the apartment. I grabbed it, my first apartment all for myself, after having occupied the other one in company. And so I said good-bye to my friends, who, without being anarchists, treated me like a brother. And naturally I didn't forget to say goodbye to my other dear friend: the horse.

By now I had saved just enough to send the money to Maria to come to Havana, which she did as soon as she could. Meanwhile I was continuing to work as a lather but in ads in the *New York Times*, which I had started to read from the first day I arrived in New York with the help of a dictionary I was reading every day that painters, meaning house painters, were earning eleven and even twelve dollars a day, while I as a lather was earning only 4.90, or a little over. And by now being October there was more than a column asking for painters, and all with such high wages. And that told me that I was an idiot to work for about 5 dollars when I could earn more than twice that as a painter. So I decided to become one of them, even if I had never touched a brush in all my life. And as I am flexible in learning new professions I decided that I would be a painter in two weeks, more than doubling my wages.

It was a challenge to myself. While continuing to work as a lather, I bought half a gallon of white paint, and a variety of colors I had picked up in the paint store. For hours at night I would match the colors, in order to find out what color and how much I needed of each to form the various colors in the list. At the end of the week—having been informed that it was the owner who had to furnish the brushes to the workers—I quit my job as a lather and I presented myself as an apprentice painter to a boss who was seeking one in the *Times*. He hired me, and I went to work immediately with three painters who were painting a huge apartment of about ten rooms on Riverside Drive. And since the apartment had some twelve quite large closets, the skunks of painters kept me the entire week painting inside those tremendous closets all day long, which after a while would become,

inside, like a gas chamber, while they were doing the good job and laughing at a dumb apprentice just arrived from Europe (as I had told them I was to explain my lack of knowledge of the "American" system of painting). During that week I had poisoned myself learning how to handle that brush. As I was eager to get out of the closets when it began to stink badly, the second half of the closet I learned to paint at the speed of... lightning, in order to pass to the next closet and half closing myself inside, to rest where there was no smell of paint yet. Meanwhile I was also watching the other painters—how they were doing the work—and continuing mixing colors in the evening.

At the end of the week I considered that I had become so smart in handling the brush and painting, to consider myself a... painter. So I quit the job as an apprentice and the following Monday I presented myself as a painter in a new job. They took me, and for more than a year I passed from one job to the other, always looking for the best; in total working as a painter for almost two years. Then arriving at the conclusion that it was not too healthy, and it was time I should change for a healthier job, one where there would be no stinking paint. And so I decided to become a bricklayer. It took me three full months before I was admitted in the union as a full fledged brick layer. And bricklayer has been the ideal profession for me, a none-too-regular worker. Out in the open, good air up high, and sun in quantity, and work never too... permanent, always hating the permanent job as a... permanent slavery, never having possessed the ambition of becoming rich. And so bricklaying was the last profession I practiced, although during the Depression there was a moment I was learning three new jobs simultaneously, none of which I put into practice because I went for a change of air to the battlefields of Spain.

Maria arrived in Havana, and now it was the problem of having her come to keep me company. A problem much more complicated than mine, as I could hide in any boat, but she couldn't risk doing that, because it would be too dangerous. A beautiful, charming

girl like her hidden in a cargo boat with total strangers, of different countries, she would risk to be passed... in review by the whole crew, often drunkards, and after thrown to the fish. Who could afterwards show there had been murder? It is already dangerous for men, and doubly so for women alone. It was necessary to find a less risky means. After a few weeks a Cuban comrade offered to let Maria represent her among the Indians of America as if she was herself one. An ideal idea, as the Cubans at that time, like all the other inhabitants of America, were free to go to the States when they wanted, there being no quota for them.

But what happened to the unlucky Maria? A lunatic, with wife and two or three children, in whose house she had rented a room, fell madly in love with her, and he didn't want that. Maria should not leave Cuba. And the day she was ready to leave Cuba, and she was already on the boat ready to sail, he denounced her to the police who took her off the boat. Luckily they didn't arrest her, although the lunatic told the police that she was not Cuban, but Andalusian. And the day she was supposed to arrive I was at the port to receive my... Cuban wife, myself having become an Andalusian for the occasion...

We had to restart the whole thing. Maria, naturally, went to hide in another place. And so another month had to pass before she could try again as another Cuban girl. A little transformed, with less publicity this time, and not so many comrades to say goodbye to her at the pier, she took another boat, this time with no lunatic in love to interrupt my joy. At her arrival I presented myself to the captain to claim my... merchandise, who was already advancing toward me resplendent in beauty, the captain ready to deliver her to me... after observing all the rules of the case, he having to celebrate the matrimony between a Cuban and a *gallego*, this time, the comrade who I represented having before departed for Andalusía, and I having to become *gallego* in order to be able to claim my Cuban wife. But not before two nuns had arrived to serve as witnesses for the ceremony, and so permit the new

wife to disembark, and throw herself into my eager arms, the nuns being witnesses who served in all similar cases. The captain read to me and to Maria the duties of husbands toward wives, and of wives toward husbands, then declared that the gorgeous wife was my property, and I property of my wife. Then he delivered us to the two nuns, and in their company we touched the sacred soil of the Yankees.

By now on the dock, and considering that we were on solid ground, we got ready to say goodbye and thanks to the dear “sisters” who were studying us with a smile. “Just a moment, *señorita*—pardon, now *señora*,” intervened the other “sister”, “*esta noche* you should sleep *con nosotras* in the convent.”

“*En el convento, hermanas?*” exclaimed Maria, surprised.

“*Si, por esto nos llamaron*, not only to be witnesses.”

“Ah!...” sighs Maria, “*pero esto sería crudelad!*” continues the eloquent bride, “after dreaming so much *a las delicias de de la primera noche de amor!*”

“It is the law, *y nosotras tenemos que salvar su virtud* one more night.”

“*¿Qué virtud?*” The two “sisters” started to laugh.

“Yes... what virtue?”

“Yes,” I intervened, “What virtue?” And I joined them in laughing.

“*Bueno, bueno,*” said one.

“*Vayan, vayan,*” said the other.

“*Es tiempo perdido* ours, in trying to save one more night *una virtud...*” continued the first.

“... *que se ha perdido!*” added the other.

“... by centuries!” I concluded.

“*Que Dios los bendiga!*” ended the most humorous of the “sisters”.

And they embraced us, laughing while leaving. And how different was their modern God compared to the old Biblical God. This modern God was forgiving the disobedience to his command

not to eat the apple, while the old tyrant condemned our forefathers to slave labor for life just for having disobeyed him once, poor Adam and Eve. From this it can be seen that God's character has sweetened.

Maria found work immediately in a tailor shop of expensive men's suits. After seeing what fine work she could produce—the French comrades had taught her well—they paid her thirty dollars a week, two dollars more than I had been earning myself as a lather before I doubled my salary as a painter. We had never earned so much money, and soon we were installed in an apartment of our own choosing. We should have been fully satisfied... and yet we were not, as both of us were dreaming of our Parisian life of less pay, but more congenial to our bohemian character. From this, from the beginning we decided to sacrifice our lives' work as regularly as possible, and avoid buying superfluous things in order to put aside some money so that we could return to Paris as soon as possible to establish ourselves there permanently. Naturally without sacrificing our activity in our movement in various languages while here, a natural part of our rebel lives.

And it was in this way that four years of our American phase passed, which I will not describe in details, being the least interesting of my life; the American life of that time remaining always a little strange to those who were used to the European life. If one arrives as an adult on American soil, it is practically impossible to become entirely Americanized. Our children, if we have them, will be, but not us. For our psychology, even for one like me, adaptable in all environments, there will be always something indigestible in it. We may make love with them, but they will always be the "Americans" and we the "foreigners". It is a barrier which can't be demolished easily. Just the opposite of how I was feeling in Paris, Barcelona, or Madrid where I felt myself to be a part of it from the first moment I set foot there. A citizen of the city, not somebody passing through. Is it perhaps because those are Latin countries and we can penetrate more easily their psychology? I don't want to speculate, but only state a personal

experience.

It must have been the beginning of 1928 and the work crisis was beginning to be felt. Maria and I felt that it was time to find out how things were in Paris. Maria also needed some rest after working steadily from the moment she had arrived in the States. And for her part she was set on returning to Paris from the beginning of her stay here, that she rather learned Italian, instead of English as where she was working all were speaking Italian to her. So Maria left first for Paris to investigate how things were over there, and find out if they were favorable. They had not changed much, so her impression was favorable. I could not follow her immediately, first because I didn't enjoy the same mobility, and second, because with comrades I had taken the responsibility of publishing *Eresia*, a magazine, not guessing that the crisis would arrive sooner than we had expected.

Maria having found the situation in Paris satisfactory, it was up to me to find the means to join *her* this time. After finding a comrade who could take over the work I was doing in editing *Eresia*, I put all the material I had prepared for the next issue in his hands and departed. And not having any other means, I engaged myself as a sailor to work during the crossing until we reached Casablanca, helping in loading the boilers with coal, and doing other work. One stormy night I was lucky that I didn't disappear, in the darkness, into the sea, while emptying a barrel of cinders into it. I saved myself by letting the barrel fall into the sea, while I grabbed a rope in time that was hanging outside the boat, and pulled myself up again to safety. Otherwise... goodbye me, without anybody knowing how I had disappeared, as all the crew were already sleeping (only one man down in the boiler working with me up on the deck, loading the cans of cinder down below, and afterwards helping me in pulling them up, I emptying them into the sea). I have never forgotten that tragic moment of my life when I could have ended it so stupidly, without any of my comrades—besides Maria—knowing how I ended. As in a hurry to catch the boat I didn't have any time to notify anybody how and by which boat I had departed,

not being permitted by my situation to go regularly. Generally the other sailor—who was a real sailor, and used to that kind of work on boats—and I alternated in doing the work of getting rid of the cinders at night when everybody else had gone to sleep, while we took care of our shift in the boiler—I replacing another sailor—one day, I, down in the boiler loading the cans of cinders, and the other on deck emptying the cinders in the sea. And that night the tempest had to happen on my shift to be on deck... dancing with the tremendous waves, and hardly being able to move and keep my equilibrium, while embracing the loaded can of cinders, and trying to reach the sea without falling into it. I was scared like hell, but not wanting to confess it to the other man who from down below was giving me signals to speed up the unloading, because the boilers were hungry for more coal, and I had to go down to help him. And how could I tell him that I was afraid... I, the adventurer? And the worst of it was that on that trip almost any other night, when it was my night—oh the deck was a night of tempest. So when it happened that I had to be on deck... dancing, I would rather be dead than to confess my fear.

No, that trip was certainly not a trip... to paradise! And I felt really happy when I put my foot in Casablanca, my friends on the boat continuing for Greece, and I France. In Paris, meanwhile, Maria had rented a room in a small house, where other Spanish comrades had gone to live with their families. A very lovely place for the company, where the first Sunday after my arrival a group of Italian comrades came to visit us and get the news of what was going on in the country of the Indians. All comrades who had escaped from Mussolini's totalitarian regime, called fascism, based on the totalitarian model in matter of repression that Lenin and company had inaugurated in Russia.

But Maria's and my plans were not to live in one room like before, in which still the other anarchist refugees were forced to live, who always considered themselves—including ourselves—*oiseaux de*

France

passage, waiting to return to Spain, Italy, or any other country. We, instead, had the intention to use the 4,000 dollars which from our hard work we had saved in America to build a house outside of Paris and stay permanently.

We didn't make our calculations right. Having left France voluntarily with a good permit to work, we thought that we were perfectly in order with all the rules and that we had only to notify the police of our presence in Paris in order to obtain a new permit to work and residence, and to start realizing our plans while we had the money. Therefore the first thing we did was to buy a beautiful piece of land just twenty minutes by train to the center of Paris, enough to build two one-family houses, with a nice piece of land left to cultivate our vegetables. The land was of the best. So the day after buying the land we went to the police to renew our permit, and a big surprise awaited us.

“Ah! *C'est vous?*” exclaimed the commissar—addressing himself to me. “Thanks for having come to visit us. We were searching for you, and we couldn't find you.”

“What news is this... that you are announcing to me?” I played dumb.

“You are expelled from France!”

“Expelled?... But gentlemen, how can you expel me if I was not even in France? I have been living for four years in America and I have just returned a few days ago.”

“We don't need to have you present in order to expel you. We only had to find you in order to announce it to you. And now we have you.”

And they got ready to put their hands on me, a thing I am... allergic to.

“And the document of your expulsion is right here.” He showed it to me from a distance. “Pardon!... Can I read that document?”

“You have the right.” And they passed the paper of my ex-

pulsion. Everything was correct, but they had made a mistake. They had me exactly ten years older. I saw a salvation... at least from an immediate arrest.

“Gentlemen! This man is not me!” I shouted, triumphant. “This individual is not even my father, although the years he has he almost could be my father. He is ten years older than me.” The commissar snatched the paper from my hands and started to read it, while Maria, upset, was looking at me. To her I said in Spanish loud enough for everybody to hear, although she could speak French: “They have expelled a guy who has the same name I have, and the commissar makes the mistake of thinking that I am he, while we were in America.”

The commissar studies me for a moment, then looks at Maria.

“Who is this girl?”

“My Cuban wife. I married her in America.”

“Let me see the documents.”

“I have forgotten them in America.” I could not show that to him because it said that the husband of Maria was a certain Vizuete, Spanish, not I.

“Then let me see your papers.” “Here they are.” And after studying them a moment: “Yes, you are really ten years younger than the one mentioned here in this expulsion, but we know that this is you because all the rest corresponds to the original.” He concluded with a smile.

“What a strange coincidence!” I also smiled.

“*Bien, bien*, you, can go now, but don’t forget to notify us if you change your address; we want to visit you as soon as we clarify this mystery.”

We remained in suspense, but that expulsion worried me (although, expulsions, generally, were to Belgium, not to Italy, for Italian refugees). For us deserters of the first World War it was tearful, because while there had been an amnesty in Italy for desertion, in many cases, if the deserter had not been sent back the military uniform when he

France

deserted, he might have been kept in jail for years for stealing the military uniform. And that was my case, having forgotten to return my uniform after escaping. I didn't take it with me, so how could I send it back? I could not run away naked from the army. We decided to remain and take the risk in order to see if now that they had been informed that I was not even in France when they expelled me, they would just forget about me. And so while waiting Maria and I started to work to save money for the house, I as a *plaqueur*, which is to beautify the furniture, a trade I had also learned in Paris. We thought that it would be a short time of suspenseful waiting before the police would notify us their final decision.

But a month passed, and no news from the police. And then two months passed and still no news. We were convinced that the expulsion had been forgotten. We were certainly not going to them to make them remember about it. Therefore we decided to move to our land, buy the material, and start to build the house. I had to do all the work by myself: buy the material, mix the cement, carry the cement and the bricks, and lay them, since the 4,000 dollars were just enough to buy all the material. Temporarily, we even used the same material to build a barracks in which to cook and sleep right there. Maria commuted to Paris by train every day to work to earn enough to eat. As in our street we were the first house to be built, we didn't have the water we needed for the work, and for our needs. And since the water was almost two hundred yards away, and had to be carried in buckets, walking, to save time we brought from Spain Maria's mother to help to carry the water and to cook. Naturally, to show that we had not run away, we notified the local police of our presence, before they would discover us themselves. And so we started building... twelve hours a day, seven days a week, trying to have the house finished before new complications would happen. Maria, when she would come home from work, would help her mother to cook.

Naturally the foundations, and then the first five feet of wall the work got up in no time, as I am a pretty fast worker; but the real

difficulties started when I had to put up the scaffold. I had to bring the bricks up, go down to mix the cement, carry it up to the scaffold, and lay the bricks before the cement would get hard. I had to be like an acrobat, jumping up and down the scaffold, quite often having also to interrupt the work to buy something I needed urgently, the nearest shop being one or two miles away... walking. And as the house was two stories high, it is easy to imagine all the work that had to be done. And for fear of being interrupted by the police at any moment, I had to be continuously on the run in order to be able to finish the house before they would intervene and stop me.

On Sundays, even Maria gave a hand in the building to speed it up. It was work from sunup to sundown. The only diversion we allowed ourselves for many weeks was to invite a group of comrades for dinner on Sunday, but we were forced to refuse all other invitations to visit them. We were working under pressure, and somehow we never felt sure that we would finish the house. Because although the local police who once in a while we saw in the distance never came to disturb us, we had the impression that they were watching how fast the house was going up. And that made us uneasy because it made us think that they were well informed of my expulsion, although we had not told them anything.

Finally when the brickwork was all finished, and the following Sunday four bricklayer comrades came to help me put up the roof, which was the only work I could not do by myself, and only the inside work remaining to be finished, the... cataclysm of our hopes happened. The very next day, at about two o'clock, Maria's mother and I were working as usual, she carrying her buckets of water, and I doing the rest, we saw in the distance Maria coming from the station, running, and making gestures to me of alarm. I dropped everything and rushed to meet her to hear what had happened.

“Run, run, there at the station come two policemen to arrest you and deport you to Italy! I recognized them in the train, and they stopped at the station to ask how to come here. And I came running.”

“And how do you know?” I asked her while I was changing my dirty pants.

“The same policeman who saved you in Barcelona now works here at the Spanish consulate, and he learned the news that they would arrest you, and deport you to Italy, and he rushed to tell it to the comrades, who immediately informed me at the job, as they don’t know where we live yet. And I rushed home to tell you.”

It only took a few seconds to tell me that, and without taking anything, I was on my way to the station, while shouting at Maria to bring me some clothes to the station in Paris with the night train. On the way to the station I passed the two policemen, who had stopped in the street to ask a woman at the door of her house where my street was. The woman saw me passing, but feigned not to recognize me, the policemen not being well-loved in France, and from the fact that they had come from Paris to look for me probably suspecting that they had not come just to greet me. So she turned her back at me while I was passing, while pointing my street out to the policemen, who got on their way. Before disappearing down the road I turned around and seeing that the woman was still at the door looking in my direction, I waved to her, she waving back, obviously satisfied with what she had done for me. It was my luck that the police is not loved in all the Latin countries. (In Milan, during my youth, the ordinary policeman was not allowed to get married—like the priests—and a girl who would say a word to them would feel herself dishonored, like a kind of prostitute. A poor policeman had to jerk himself or go to a prostitute for help. It was all the love that they could enjoy.)

In the evening, at the station, I saw Maria arrive. But she was followed closely by the two policemen ten steps behind. Not finding me home, they had remained near the house all afternoon waiting for me; Maria told them that I must have gone to buy something for the house. Naturally in order not to look suspicious to me when I would return, they waited at some distance from the house, and when they saw Maria sneaking out of the house, they followed her to Paris in

the same train, Maria feigning not to see them, and they feigning not to see her, but watching every move she was doing. They were hoping to catch me in that way, forgetting that anarchists are used to that kind of trick, and are always on their guard in emergency situations. And this was one of them, and naturally I had suspected that in not finding me home they would wait for me, as they could not return to Paris without their man or they would get hell.

And there they were following Maria, and I was standing there in the middle of the crowd pretending to be reading the newspaper and not recognizing Maria. She spotted me immediately and passed near me, serious, to make sure that I had seen her, and giving me a sign that she was followed, while continuing to circulate as if looking for me among the other passengers, who at that hour were crowding the station. The second time that she passed near me she whispered: "Wait for me outside!"

I let the two policemen pass, who luckily didn't know me, then I went out in the street. I waited almost half an hour in a dark spot before I saw her coming out almost running. I signaled to her where I was.

"They are there watching the toilet for women, but I have been able to go out without being seen by them."

We entered the nearest Metro (subway) and we went to the railroad station for Belgium. We knew that our adventure with the house was at an end, and we decided right there that we had to go back to revisit the Indians. We were cured of Paris, which after such a disastrous experience was no longer our dream. And at the station while waiting the train for Brussels she was able to give me all the details of how the police had come to arrest me to carry out the expulsion which they didn't do the first time. They must have corrected their error.

We agreed to meet the next Sunday in Brussels in the room of Maria's sister and her husband, who had also been expelled from France three months before. She, being pregnant, a few weeks before had come to join him, and later on, after they had the child, they

departed for Mexico City, where they still live. It was in their room in a hotel like in Paris that we really decided to return to New York. Therefore Maria returned to Paris to wind up the problem of selling the unfinished house by leaving it in the hands of a real estate company, then going back to the States to wait for me this time. As a... Cuban she was able to return whenever she wanted. Meanwhile her two brothers, who had also come to Paris went to occupy our house to save it from pillage as an abandoned house. The two brothers themselves, after a few months, also were expelled to Belgium. It was a period when, under the pressure of the governments of Italy and Spain, Italian and Spanish anarchists were expelled from France into Belgium every week. And so the house remained abandoned. Weeks later, I left again for Cuba, and only three months later—in debt by five hundred dollars to friends in the States—I was able to join Maria in the city of the skyscrapers. More than one year had passed since we had left. The adventures in my long trip, with all its expenses in order to succeed, at the end put us in debt in the amount of more than six hundred dollars. The house sold later on for only eight hundred dollars, a theft for not being there, which served to pay the debt. Our savings of four years of work in America, besides months of work in Paris, had gone up in smoke. To be proprietors?... *Merde!* as the Frenchmen would say.

And now the most tragic part of my life. Only a few months after my return Maria fell gravely sick of pneumonia, at the time still one of the greatest killers. She had suffered it once before in Paris while I was in Argentina. To receive better care, Doctor Brunori, a real saint of a man... an atheist, who had established himself as the free doctor for dozens of anarchists—Italians, Spanish and others—advised us that she should go to the hospital near him, which was where three years before the doctors had saved me from a burst appendix. In the hospital, run by nuns, the patients at that time could be visited only twice a week (which probably was the rule that existed in all hospitals): Thursday and Sunday. When I visited her on Thursday the

doctors told me that on Sunday I would be able to take her home. So when I went there on Sunday, full of joy, and didn't find her, and her bed had disappeared, I became alarmed. Having been there myself for that operation years before, I knew that it was a sign of tragedy, because when some patient was dying they would take him or her from the room—which was very large and contained about ten patients—and they would place them in the corridor in order not to frighten the other patients. When the other patients, with sad faces, told me that they had taken her to the corridor, I guessed immediately that she was dying. I rushed to the corridor and found her there behind a curtain. She still recognized me, but she could not speak anymore. Half of her body and her face were paralyzed.

I ran to phone to Brunori who came immediately. And after examining her he drew me outside of the curtain so that she would not hear us.

"Get ready!... It is the end!... And those... cows," (he meant the nuns) "didn't even notify me."

"Nor did they notify me," I added.

"But I am her doctor, and I only live a few minutes walk from here, and this is where I send all my patients."

At two o'clock in the morning, Maria died, the ideal companion of my life! She died in the flower of her life. She was thirty years old. She didn't die for the fault of the doctors, since she was susceptible to pneumonia, having had it already once in Paris, and at that time they didn't have the antibiotics to treat such sicknesses. It was the year 1930. It is tragic to die so young when one is so much in love with life, and enjoying it so much. Tragic for the one who departs, and tragic for the one who remains and sees one's dream shattered, forced to begin a new life.



SPAIN

More than six years have passed since that tragic Sunday. At the end of January 1937, I was on a boat on the way to Spain. How Maria would have greeted with joy this day so much dreamed about, the day of revolt in Spain.

Yes, tremendous events had happened in that country in the preceding year: A revolution and a war combined. And since then I couldn't find peace for not being able to be a part of it, and help in any way I could. And, the impossibility of going there immediately, for lack of means, was taking away my sleep, since I had known Spain in Barcelona in one of its most tragic periods. At the time of the murderous pistoleros, when the Spanish, my comrade anarchists, in order to survive, had to fight a kind of running battle every day with the forces of reaction.

And it wasn't only the lack of money that stopped me from rushing to Spain to take part in the struggle. I had tried to enroll in the Lincoln Brigade, at the beginning, when the organizers of that brigade had themselves passed for "democrats" and for my facility with languages they would have taken me but I immediately smelled the stink of totalitarian communism under their democratic cover, which was to go to Spain not to defend liberty, but strangle it; and I said to hell with them, even though they were ready to accept me. Therefore I was forced to wait until I was able to go at my own expense, without anyone's help, and on my own responsibility, no matter what adventures I would meet.

Landing in France, in Paris I only stopped to change trains. Next day I crossed the Pyrenees, and immediately I started to breathe the air of... revolution. You could see it everywhere. It is an air which can't be confused with any pestilential authoritarian air. You breathe it, drink it like an elixir, because it is the air of freedom, of justice, of

fraternity among the oppressed, of hatred toward all forms of slavery, and total rejection of the treacherous new liberties of the red dictatorships, which are only a new form of slavery.

And finally, Barcelona! City of so many memories, sad, joyful. Where on finally arriving, I had my first... peaceful sleep in many months. Because now I knew that I, also, was in the middle of the hurricane! And I could take part in it. It was a great relief, and hearts like mine will understand me.

My first thought was to be a part of our militia, but in Barcelona I found a number of Italian comrades I knew from many years since before the first World War, who had been months at the front of Aragón, but due to the forced activity on that front for lack of weapons they had become bored in having to remain weeks without shooting even once against the enemy which they had come to fight and... exterminate; and secondly, now, the militia which was formed by volunteers had been transformed into a regular army at the service of a government: a republic which they didn't give a damn to defend. They had come to make a revolution, not a war. And therefore, disillusioned, they resigned from the militia, and many returned to France, while some of them remained in Barcelona to do whatever they could to help in the revolutionary work, like Berneri, Barbieri, Gozzoli, and others. And naturally, also deserters of the first World War to save "democracy", bourgeois democracy, could only approve such a decision. Like myself.

Besides I was reminded that now with conscription the Spaniards could conscript all the youth they needed for the army. Arms, more than men, were what they needed most. And what arms did I carry?

"Only a pistol!" I had to confess, to my shame. Certainly not sufficient to gain victories against an armed enemy.

Therefore, now I had to look for some other way to do something for the revolution. For example to fight against the communists' counterrevolution, who in their lunacy of wanting to build up their

spain

totalitarian power for themselves on the loyalist part of Spain, brazenly, with lies and brutalities and even murders, had started to sabotage the revolutionary conquests already put in practice in fields, factories, and in many other economic activities by the anarchists. A thing which I had already foreseen even before going to Spain, in a number of articles against the treacherous communist counterrevolution which was already raising its head in many parts of loyalist Spain.

So I became a war correspondent; a freelance, subordinate to nobody. And what follows are a selection of the articles I wrote from the end of January 1937, to November of 1937, before I fell into the hands of the communist's Cheka, and after two months in jail had to leave Spain... involuntarily, as the reader will learn, when I was rescued from the communists' gulag in Barcelona.

Now it would have been easy for me to use the material of my articles to write a coherent tale of my experiences of the Spanish revolution. But would that be authentic? Would that be really what we felt at the moment about the Spanish Revolution told, now [1978], at a distance of 41 years since 1937? Of course not. It would reflect the spirit of the historian, not the participant. That is why, precisely, in order to transfer to today's reader that authenticity of revolutionary feelings, I have decided to reproduce this selection of articles without changing a word, or embellishing, or taking out anything of what I wrote then, mostly on the run from one section of the fronts to the others, under my very eyes. With the advantage that while other correspondents of the official press before mailing their articles out of Spain had to pass them under the scissors of the censor, not one of these articles—absolutely not one—has been censored... except by me who was able to mail them uncensored all through the gracious help of an anarchist friend who was working for Miaca at the War Ministry. Therefore the reader can be sure that what I write is the truth, not what has been allowed by the censor serving the always lying governments, particularly in war time.

A VISIT TO MONTJUÏC

Since I have arrived here eight days ago, this is the first peaceful moment I have had, and I take advantage of it to tell you my first impressions of revolutionary Spain. In this, my first correspondence I will not try to give a judgment of the men and the parties that imprint their character on the happenings that are developing, happenings that we hope will change the course of history, not only of the Iberian people, but of other peoples as well. To want to form a judgment when I have only seen the surface of things would be unforgivably superficial from the part of a revolutionary who wants to inform seriously and truthfully, without distortions—for others who cannot be present on the stage of the revolution.

It will not be only the superficial manifestations that I want to capture in my reports, but the essence of things, the soul of the Spanish people, its passions, its desires, its aspirations, and even its dreams. Let the drums and blusterings of the politicians of the revolution keep silent—happily, they are not much heard—and let us hear the anxieties, the fears, the hopes, the heroisms, the hatred and the loves of these martyred people who have suffered so much and suffer in order to win justice.

I will not repeat what many “tourists” have done with the Russian Revolution, who went there for a couple of weeks, traveled from the train to the hotel, from the hotel to the car, from the car to the restaurant; observing the life of the Russian people from the windows of the trains, and its political and economical organizations through the words of the new masters who had grabbed the power by mostly stabbing the other revolutionists in the back when they were still unaware that traitors were plotting at their backs, and then, according to the luxury of the dinners and praise they got from the new masters, they went back to the capitalist countries and wrote books with the title: The Truth about the Russia of the Soviets.

Nothing of the sort. I shall try to see, hear and understand.

a visit to montjuïc

Especially to understand. I will eat the bread of the people, live its life, and I will listen to its voice and to that of the combatant. Here I shall not be the indifferent, the cold observer who only notes what his eyes see, and his brain analyzes... The scientist of the revolution will come afterwards. I shall be both the observer and the one who is observed, because I shall be part of acts and moves... since I intend to be in the middle of this great human convulsion.

And to see clearly the many-faceted things that I have seen, impressions I have experienced and absorbed, I have come to seek some solitude on murderous Montjuïcs Fortress, where Francisco Ferrer was shot.

Ah! Seventeen years before, I sat many times on this same bench... but how different my thoughts were then. That was the year of the murder of the anarchists at the hands of the reactionary pistoleros, that gang of murderers recruited and paid by the police and capitalists. (A war of the pistols that lasted almost three years, and to which the anarchists had to answer pistol with pistol in order to survive, with hundreds of dead on both sides.) And while I was meditating on this tragic period, a miliciano, seeing that I was observing the castle, which is also the fortress that protects Barcelona, respectfully comes near and asks me,

“*Compañero*, what are you writing? Why do you observe the fortress and take notes? Do you have any papers?”

“Like you, *compañero*, I am a soldier of the revolution, although in this moment you hold the rifle, and I the pen. The two weapons supporting each other. I have come from America to help you fight for the revolution!”

Satisfied he returns my passport to me, and in a way of excusing himself says:

“You know, we have to be very careful, because the ‘fifth column’ has many ramifications. Tell the American comrades that the eye of the revolution is constantly vigilant, in order not to be stabbed in the back.”

“I will!”

ON MY WAY TO MADRID

The Aragón front is paralyzed by the will of those who don't want a revolution, and I didn't come to seek rest. It is in the middle of the action that I want to be, and therefore I decide to go immediately to Madrid as in this moment that is where the fighting goes on. In Barcelona the comrades have found me a room to sleep in an apartment where there are already two families. Expropriated and... free. The owner of the house with half a dozen apartments—in order that we should not forget his presence—pays for the upkeep of the house: electricity, and all the other expenses, including the superintendent who keeps the house clean, and greets us when we enter and when we leave. And in order to exchange kindness with kindness, we leave this honor to the ex-house owner, whom we have never seen, and must have taken refuge in France or is keeping Franco company.

In this way I shall have a very... economical place to sleep when I will visit Barcelona. Where I leave my suitcase while I roam on the fronts.

Early in the morning I depart for Madrid with two comrades who go there with some products. The truck is small, and therefore in the front there is only room for two; and so it is in the company of the sacks that I shall make the long trip to Madrid. In Valencia we stop to load some more things, and it will be in the evening that we shall start for Madrid where we will arrive at dawn. A few kilometers before Madrid there is a control of all the people who go through, as only those who have some business in Madrid are allowed to enter. I have a pass and I have no difficulties in entering. It is still early and in arriving, Madrid is still sleeping, and everything seems peaceful. It gives a strange impression, a city under siege by an invasion of barbarians, and at the rising of the sun everything is peaceful... except some bursts of guns and machine guns which are heard like an echo coming from far away, the great part of the trenches being on the opposite part of the city.

on my way to madrid

However soon everything wakes up, and everything is ferment, and everywhere a feverish activity, with a main aim to defend oneself... from the barbarians at the door who want our death!

We have come in front of a building, and I say goodbye to my companions of the trip. Inside a big hall there is feverish activity. It is a meeting place of our militia, and there I make an unexpected encounter. A man runs to me... Ah! he is "Madrid", an old comrade from beyond the sea.

"And what are you doing here?" I ask him.

"As you see... I fight!" he answers me, "for the city."

And in fact he just has arrived from the Jarama front, where lately ferocious fights are in progress against the fascist army that want to cut the road from Madrid to Valencia, and in this way isolate and strangle the city. We have succeeded in stopping the fascist hordes, but at the price of a lot of blood and many lives on our part, our dead alone being more than 20,000. The small hill that "Madrid", and his *milicianos* defend had been captured and lost more than once, with many dead at each assault.

"Look at that pile of uniforms and shoes you see there in the middle of the hall. We took them from our dead before burying them... because we have no uniforms for our new recruits," he tells me with sadness. "And you, what are you doing here?"

"I had come to do what you are doing... but I have been informed that what is needed are not men, of whom we have in abundance ready to fight, but weapons."

"It is true. We have to economize arms and bury our dead naked in order to dress our new fighters. Come to see me at the front and you will see with your own eyes under what conditions we have to fight."

"I will come, after I have been first on the front of Madrid."

And the dear "Madrid" departed. Then I asked the comrades how I could go, not only on the front of Madrid, but on all the fronts, being what I wanted to do immediately, in order to inform the com-

rades in America how the Spanish people are fighting against fascism.

“For that, an authorization of Miaca, the commander of the fronts of Madrid, to visit all fronts would serve you wonderfully. Go to the Ministry of War and speak with comrade Salgado about your wish, and he’ll get for you directly from Miaca the authorisation for all fronts. However if you want to go to the fronts, that suit that you are wearing will not last you very long, with all that mud, and the rest.

“I only have one suit.”

“Choose a stronger one... from that pile, that it will serve you better than yours. And while you are at it, choose also a strong pair of shoes.” And he pointed at the pile of suits and shoes of the dead... I hesitated a moment...

“Yes! for them they don’t serve anymore,” at last I thought.

And in ten minutes I was dressed as a militia man, with the Durruti cap. Then at the War Ministry I spoke with comrade Salgado.

“Wait for me with Hilda,” he tells me leading me to a room, and presenting me to a statuesque blonde. Hilda was a German comrade united with Orobón, a Spanish comrade, who died just before the fighting started (his brother was killed in the first bombardments of Madrid, if I’m correct). At the War Ministry every day came a certain number of letters going to foreign countries, and the work of Hilda was to make sure that they didn’t contain military secrets, and stamp *censurado* on the envelope, the letters being generally in foreign languages. And it was thanks to Hilda that all my articles were mailed to the paper seen only by myself; as when I had one or more articles written, if I wasn’t already there I would rush to Madrid visit Hilda—with whom I had become a good friend—and there grab the seal of *censurado* and stamp it on the envelopes of my articles. Even Hilda would read them only when they were printed in the paper. Nobody before. That is how the censor was only myself. Thanks to Hilda and Salgado I was able to enjoy such privilege. This long parenthesis I insert here while translating this article, revealing, after more than forty-three years, how I was able to say in my articles what no other

correspondent was allowed to say, unless he or she had discovered a means as good as mine to circumvent the censorship in the hands of the government, soon under the control of the communists, who naturally only passed the informations favorable to them. In fact a number of my articles from various fronts, when I took a chance in mailing them from other cities, I had to learn later that not one had arrived to the paper. Guillotined by censorship.

So, when Salgado came back and gave me a precious document written and signed by Miaca which said "The correspondent so-and-so, is authorized to visit all the fronts," signed: Miaca, my joy was complete.

On the Madrid Front

At 8:30 in the morning, Mauro Bajatierra, one of the editors of the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist daily CNT, comes to pick me up in the Workshop of Propaganda of the Libertarian Youth. We go to the trenches of Ciudad Universitaria. We begin from the place where the enemy has put his foot on the sacred ground of Madrid.

The first stop we make is at the Command in order to obtain the authorization for my safe conduct. Colonel Ortega is still resting, but he amiably signs my document. Here in the trenches one sleeps when one can. The work goes on day and night. Particularly at night, which is when the enemy lifts his head from his hiding place. It is therefore when the fog comes down more thickly that the maxim of vigilance is required on the part of our brave fighters.

During the interminable hours of the night, the vanguard of the revolution has to keep his ear and eyes nailed to the parapets of the enemy, arms ready. At each suspicious movement in the darkness, to each rumor, the nerves become tense, the eye tries to penetrate the darkness, trying to discover if the enemy is approaching. And when the danger is real, the guns, machine guns, hand bombs, and mortars speak in a language so powerful that the cowardly enemy runs back to their lairs, if they had planned to attack.

On arriving in the first line trenches I realize that our boys have already learned the art of building trenches with sacks of sand, with holes to watch and shoot. At each sign of life in the trenches in front, there goes a bullet. In well protected caves the boys rest in the moments that the fire of the enemy lets one breathe. In one of these caves a comrade is lying down. When we arrive he opens his sleepy eyes.

“With all the noise that goes on during the night, today I would sleep all day long,” he says. “But it is not possible. We still have a lot of cleaning to do.”

“The other night, there was intensive fire and various fascists attacks in this sector,” says another, “that were repulsed with hand bombs and grapeshot. The enemy, in order to supply his troops surrounded in the Ciudad Universitaria had constructed a small bridge of cement on the Manzanares river. So our dynamiters went to place a mine, and last night they blew it up. This let loose the furor of the fascists. Three times they attacked our first lines with great fury, but with no result. They were nailed to their post.”

We congratulated them. Bajatierra advances, while he greets the militia men who practically all know him. In the trenches he, besides being the war correspondent of the daily CNT, is also a kind of good Samaritan for the combatants. He always brings them cognac, tobacco, pipes, lighters for the dynamiters, all kinds of things that the comrades of the *retroguardia* give him to distribute without putting any attention to which party they belong. Today he brings wine of Jerez.

Mauro and the other comrades in passing show me the redoubts of the enemy.

“Look at that house. It is the Institute of National Hygiene. It is in the hands of the fascists. Don’t stop to look too long or you will get a bullet in the eye. They have it well centered. We have to change the hole continuously.”

At about fifty yards I see a house, almost entirely demolished. “At its windows, of the little that remains, they have sacks of earth from where they shoot at us.”

on the madrid front

“Did you hear the sharp sound in hitting? They are explosive bullets, and when they enter your body they explode. The scoundrels of fascists use those in practically all sectors. Let's proceed.

“Here is where they killed Durruti.”

We remain a moment in silence. Then I ask if they knew who killed him.

“We have two enemies from which direction the treacherous bullet could have come. The one in front: the fascists, the other on the side: the communists. Who has it been? ... We can only speculate.”

We make a tour and we enter the trench beyond the enemy.

“This is the East Park, now entirely in our hands. It was a very, really very beautiful park!”

Nothing remains intact. Skeletal trees, and around us everything is full of holes and in tatters caused by weapons of all kinds. One is surprised at how these trees with thousands of wounds are still alive. If only human beings had the magical life of trees, I think with envy.

The bullets whistle and smash against the parapets... But here nearby there is a youngster who is well combed and... perfumed. Incredible under the circumstances.

“But... tell me. Are you going to a wedding feast?” I ask him.

“Today, here, there is only a single class of wedding,” he answers me, laughing. And *pum!* He pulls me down. Undoubtedly he has seen the head of an enemy emerge in the trench in front. A bullet whistles by. Near him there is a boy who probably isn't more than fourteen years old. I wanted to ask him if that was the children's corner; but when I saw with what seriousness he was holding the weapon, I remained terrorized. Such children can be deadly.

After crossing the West Park, following the trenches, we arrive at the Cárcel Modelo. We enter it by following a trench that passes under its external wall. It is well battered, this enormous building in which thousands of anarchists have suffered centuries of slavery.

“Here I have passed a number of years of the fourteen I have

been in jail," says Bajatierra.

Coming out from the prison, we pass through the Plaza de la Moncloa, which has been severely destroyed by the fire of the enemy. Then we pass through the Barrio of Argüelles. Here is where the enemy has been most ruthless. There is not one single house in this district which has escaped the air bombardment and the fires of artillery. Entire districts have been destroyed by the bombs and fires of the fascists. There only ruins can be seen... and hundreds of children have perished under the ruins.

Slopes of the Perdices

In the afternoon we go to the El Pardo front and we visit the extensive and tangled set of trenches of the Slopes of las Perdices. It is here that the enemy cut the road of la Coruna. Coming out to the North of Madrid we find ourselves on a small hill from which we can see the landscape for many miles around.

"There is the Casa de Campo, mostly in the hands of the enemy. That tower over there is Pozuelo de Alarcón, and the other is Aravaca, also in the hands of the enemy. And here we pass Fuencarral, and over there is the Pardo, both in our power."

The day is splendid. Sunny, and a cool breeze blows. It comes from the Guadarrama mountains, which can be seen well in the horizon, with their tops full of snow. It would be a magnificent, a superb view... if death was not spying on us from every side. With bullets whistling all around, it is a dangerous pleasure to stop to contemplate nature.

"Now we'll pass at full speed over the bridge on the Manzanares, because it is under the fire of the enemy's machine guns. If you hear shots, lower your head... Not that it will serve you much."

We could hear plenty of shots, but we didn't know if they were just to greet us. On the other side of the bridge we get out of the car we had left hidden when we arrived, and we go along the trenches of the Slopes of las Perdices. At a certain point our trench and the trench of the enemy are separated only by the Coruna road,

and a hand grenade could be thrown to the fascists or from them to us, insulting each other with the results, sometimes, on both sides, tragic, which provokes more insults. This for being bad neighbors...

We return to the car and we continue toward the Pardo. Before passing the bridge Mauro tells me:

“Do you see that Chapel of Christ there on top of that hill? It was occupied by a quite robust monk. The women of quality, sterile, used to come there, remaining three days and three nights in profound devotion, supported skillfully in their prayers by the holy father. At the end of the three days, and especially of the three nights, they departed touched by the divine grace. The monk died, and with him ended the miracles.”

We arrive at the Pardo, and as the sun goes down we are back in Madrid through the Puerta de Hierro.

The general impression that I have derived from the contact with our fighters in the line of fire, is that there, where the danger is greatest, among those who risk their lives, there is great harmony, and the unshakeable decision exists to fight until victory is won.

In the District of Usera

Next day we visit another sector of fighting. It is the district of Usera. It was from here that the mercenaries of Franco tried to enter into Madrid, when the siege started. This district, like Argüelles, is almost totally destroyed, and the victims among the non-fighting population have been enormous.

To look for new adjectives to describe the barbarous fascist actions is useless, since it has already surpassed in cruelty and lack of any humanitarian sense all the preceding barbarism. It makes victims among the unarmed population, and also destroyed the Red Cross hospital. Even in the frightful carnage of the Great War the hospitals were respected; and when some one was touched by one or the other of the fighting armies, everywhere the world's indignation protested violently. But now, one of the best objectives of the fascists is where

the Red Cross is, to the point that these, instead of serving as protection, serve instead as targets for the fascists' bombs. And the saddest thing is that world opinion has become so insensitive to all brutalities, that it remains indifferent to any fascist's violation of all humanitarian law. So great is the degeneration of the morale of the democracies.

We pass over the bridge of the Princesa over the Manzanares and we head to the firing line.

"Look," Bajatierra tells me, "to your left is the Cerro Rojo, before called the Cerro de los Angeles. It is one week ago that it was conquered by our troops, who took many prisoners and a lot of war material. Then it was thought convenient to abandon it again in order to avoid the danger of having our troop cut out by a flank movement of the enemy. The statue of Christ built up there on the hill remains impassive contemplating all the monstrosities committed by the fascists over Madrid... although, it is true, in justice to poor Christ, his head is missing, and without a head..."

"Our trenches from this side are at least a kilometer from the bridge of the Princesa, and in despite of what the world reactionary opinion thinks, the troops of Franco, with all their attempts, never came near to the Bridge of the Princesa.

"In these trenches, like in all the others, vigilance never stops. At a certain point the distance between our troops and those of the enemy is no more than 45 or 55 yards. In a recent battle in which the two forces clashed between the trenches, the enemy left many men. From our parapets we counted fifteen of their corpses among few of ours. Due to the proximity, we weren't able to retrieve ours. Last night our men, in the darkness, went out of the trenches and crawling came near the enemy's trenches, which they attacked with hand bombs. One of our boys in passing near one of our corpses, and confusing him with one of those that were going with him, told him:

"Forwards, *compañero*, don't stop! Always forwards!"

"Yes," concludes the optimist Bajatierra, "the sacrifices will be many, because freedom has to be paid for at a very high price. But at

the end our battalions will go forward like an irresistible avalanche, until the enemy will be crushed!"

ON THE JARAMA FRONT

Since by now I have gone through all the fronts near Madrid, this morning I went searching for comrade "Nobruzan", the war correspondent of *Castilla Libre*, who generally goes to the more distant fronts. I don't find him at the paper, but later on he comes to search me out. We decide to go to the front of El Jarama next morning. Meanwhile in the pauses between one front and the other, I visit Hilda at the War Ministry, to give her a hand if it is needed, and to be able to mail my articles with that beautiful magic seal of *censurado*; a guarantee that they will arrive intact at their destination, instead of becoming the victims of the enemies of anarchism.

At eight o'clock in the morning "Nobruzan" picks me up at the "Hotel of the Committee of the Confederated Defense", located right at the corner of the Plaza del Sol, and a few steps from the Ministry of War, which is half demolished by the bombardments. Nobruzan comes loaded with *Castilla Libre* and *CNT* which everywhere we pass we distribute to the militia men, no matter who they are, even communists, in this case with protests of their leaders, who want their troops to be ignorant of what the anarchists think, in order to maneuver them more easily. With us comes also the photographer of *Castilla Libre*.

"Do you want a sip?" Nobruzan asks me, offering me the bottle.

"I am not a drinker," I answer him, declining.

"Ah!!! My luck!"

We arrive at the Bridge of Arganda, where the road to Valencia crosses the Jarama. It is there that the fascists in their offensive concentrated their most ferocious attacks, because if they had succeeded in cutting the Madrid-Valencia road they would have isolated Madrid,

and forced it to surrender in a short time, as it is still the only road open to receive what Madrid needs to resist the fascist hordes.

The bridge of Arganda is still in our hands, but the enemy's forces on the Pingarrón with their fire dominate it from on high, some fascists being seen moving around on the summit, one of them carrying a bucket of water, which up there must be scarce. A group of our comrades in the trench nearby could shoot at them, but they don't do it.

"How is it that, so near, you don't shoot, when they are in full view?"

"We have a kind of silent agreement with them. By now we know, after so many battles in these last few weeks, that neither they from up there have the strength to dislodge us, nor we from down here have the strength to dislodge them from their positions. Therefore up there the simple soldiers, when no officers are around, if they see us in the open, don't shoot at us, and we simply don't find pleasure in killing people, when it would not bring us any strategic advantage. And so we tolerate each other... at times."

The comrades belong to the syndicate of Restaurants and Hotels of the CNT. So they improvise a magnificent dinner—considering the situation—under the very nose of the enemy. A dinner that we finish with cheerfulness, considering that Nobruzan was bringing the special ingredient... in the bottle. Then the comrades tell us about the inferno that has been the offensive which has just finished. It is from the counter-offensive to recapture the road of Valencia which the fascists had succeeded in occupying, that the pile of clothes and shoes from our dead had come, from which myself, now, I was dressed, as a souvenir of the tremendous price we shall have to pay in this revolutionary war in order to save the liberty that we are still enjoying.

We go all along the trench greeting the comrades, while the photographer of *Castilla Libre* takes photographs of the combatants, who even here, under great danger, still find the desire to smile. Later Nobruzan, not having succeeded in finding the sector of "Madrid",

on the jarama front

the comrade I met on my arrival, wants to show me an experiment of libertarian communism. It is Tielmes.

Tielmes is a village of 2,500 inhabitants, not far from this front. The community is composed of peasants who were the poorest of the village. They are members of the CNT. At the beginning of the war they decided to put everything in common, and to work the land together. This radical decision changed their conditions enormously, and the villagers transformed themselves into an important economic force. They cultivated olives, and they produce mostly oil. And although only a few minutes before, the fascists bombarded them, the mill was safe, although parts of the railroad and the electrical line were demolished. I asked the secretary:

“How do you work?”

“Each one is occupied in what is most useful to the community.”

“Do you still use money?”

“Yes, but only to buy what we can’t interchange.”

“Then do you have a salary for those who work?”

“Yes, a family salary. A man gets 2.50 *pesetas* a day, and if he has a family, 4 *pesetas*. And for each child, a minor, 0.50 more, and for a grown child 3 *pesetas*.“

“All right, but with what everything costs this seems to me not much to live.”

“This would be true if it were all. But with the salary each comrade receives the products that the family needs. Look, each family has received 100 kilograms of potatoes (a kilogram, 1,000 grams), plus 50 kilograms for each grown child, and 25 kilograms for the small children; Besides 50 kilograms of oil per family, the grown children 20 kilograms, and the small ones 7 kilograms. The families receive also 3 *pesetas* per family, and the single persons 2 *pesetas*. And if you keep in mind all the other numerous things we enjoy, you can be sure that in spite of the war our conditions have improved one hundred per cent.”

“And the other persons in the village including the socialists and the communists? How do they look at your experiment?”

“With much hostility.”

ON THE GUADALAJARA FRONT

I have just passed two days on the Guadalajara front, and in entering Madrid I witness a combat in the air between our planes and three fascists who were trying to bombard Madrid. Here we don't read about the war, but we see it. The shooting and the explosions are never far. On the front of Guadalajara I didn't pass from one fighting place to the other protected in good trenches like in the fronts near or inside the city of Madrid, but I have seen war in the open fields, the only place where one can realize how deadly the arms of modern wars of destruction are.

It is again with Nobruzan of *Castilla Libre* that I go to the front. When we arrive in Guadalajara we stop a moment in the syndicate of the CNT located in a convent of nuns, where our comrades enjoy their involuntary hospitality. We continue for Torija, which is twenty kilometers further on the road to Zaragoza, and at six kilometers from the front.

Before entering the village we have to jump from the car and hide, because the “widows”, as the Italian Caproni and the Jumker are called, are bombarding us. The combat gets complicated, because our chatos—as they are tenderly called, our hunters—appear on the horizon, and the sky is filled with machine guns firing. Once the danger is past we come out of our hole, and enter the village to see the guns taken from the fascists, seeing also a mass of ammunition and guns taken in the capture, or recapture, of Trijueque, which the day before the “glorious” Freccia Nera of Mussolini's army had succeeded in capturing, breaking the front of the 11th Division of Lister.

Nobruzan, as usual, had to return to Madrid to write what he has seen for *Castilla Libre*, which is daily and can't wait, and I, a self-designated war correspondent, remain. We advance three kilometers

on the guadalajara front

toward the front on a truck, after which I must entrust everything to my legs, as we are near to the front lines.

First I stop near an improvised camp telephone where I hear a Babel of languages. Here my linguistic knowledge serves me well. There are Italians, French, Germans, besides Russians, Poles, Czechoslovaks, Hungarians, etc, etc. I carry French, Italian, and German papers that Nobruzan had left me, and in a minute they are all distributed, the volunteers taking them with pleasure, while their communist commanders... they look at me, as always, surly and even protesting. Which leaves me indifferent. The slaves are those who interest me, not those who think themselves their masters. Not far away I arrive near a battery of six guns in action. It is the Thailman battery. It is deafening!

“Why don’t you put some cotton in your ears?” I ask the gunner.

“Put a toothpick in your mouth and it is sufficient,” he answers me. Is it true?

Two militiamen and I climb a promontory in order to see where our bombs are exploding on the enemy’s rearguard; but immediately we hear the whistle of an enemy shell passing over our heads, and we throw ourselves on the ground. Others follow the first explosions, making our position dangerous, because the enemy’s batteries have located ours, and a duel gets underway, and we in the middle. It is said that when the whistle of the projectiles are heard, this is already passed, but to me it seemed that between the sound and the burst... the time to throw oneself to the ground probably is just an illusion, if the explosion is near. But those that cannot be heard are the bombs that come from the planes, which didn’t seem higher than a thousand yards over our heads.

When night came, and the shooting quieted down, I returned to Torija; and as the loudspeaker had arrived, we searched for a good position to speak to the valorous army of Mussolini... in flight. Then I had to search for some place to sleep, difficult for me to find as I didn’t have any blanket, and as it is still the middle of March it was

very cold, particularly on the ground soaked by the rain. And in each place, in every corner there was somebody stretched on the ground, wrapped in his blanket. Therefore I also stretched out on the ground in a place full of militiamen, the heavy suit of the dead protecting me from entirely freezing. However as soon as I closed my eyes I heard the thunder of a bombardment squad that was coming near. But it was useless to move, since we did not know where the bombs would fall. At every explosion the earth trembled.

“Sons of bitches! I wish you crack!” whispers a militiaman near me. A not very protective wish. But thanks to the total darkness, not one bomb fell on us. Otherwise it would have been a disaster, with hundreds of dead. Especially because they bombarded us two more times, sparing us by very little. So, still in one piece, the following morning I take the road toward Trijueque, and outside of the village I see a tank that was moving toward the front. I run after it, and the militiaman in the open helps me to climb on it. We arrive at about three hundred yards from the first line and the tank stops.

“Here we stop,” the comrade tells me.

“And I continue. But let me look inside and greet your comrades for being so kind to give me this free ride.”

Since bullets were heard whistling, I proceed cautiously, trying to expose myself as little as possible, until I find the improvised first line trench, still only a little deep. I ask the militiamen why they don't dig it deeper for better protection, and they tell me that it is only temporary. They hope to advance.

“Do you like Italian marmalade?” asks me one of them.

“Do I like it?... It arrives just in time. I have a ferocious hunger!”

But as soon as I start eating, my dear compatriots, to avenge themselves because I, not they, is eating their marmalade, send us a rain of bombs.

“The scoundrels! They want me to eat marmalade and bombs!”

After half an hour the explosions were so continuous, that the

on the guadalajara front

comrades in another little trench nearby were forced to evacuate, not to be annihilated.

“It is a day of bombardments!” murmurs my neighbor. And he was right, as it was a sunny day. And soon came the “widows” over our heads, and the explosions, the detonations of their bombs followed one after the other, and we crouched into the half-built trench, without any means of defense. And under the bombs, to give oneself airs of heroes is ridiculous. Therefore we covered ourselves as best we could; and you can be certain that we didn’t stay there contemplating the... beautiful bombs that were falling on our heads. And in a moment of pause I jumped out of the trench to pick up some branches that were lying in a pile nearby.

“Eh you, are you crazy? Come back into the trench!”

I did, with a bundle of branches, with which we disguised the trench a little, not to be so visible from the air.

“In this way those delinquents will not see us so well!” I shouted in order to be heard among the din.

An hour later things calmed down, and it was time to visit the other sectors of the front. Therefore I shook the hands of my comrades and running, I crossed the road nearby, until I reached the comrades who had been honored by the last bombs... and were awaiting those that would follow.

“Are there victims?”

“We saved ourselves with only fear. Look outside at all the holes.” Too many to count.

I continued. I wanted to arrive at the other road of Brihuega where I was yesterday, because I wanted to find the Garibaldi Battalion, which in this offensive was part of the division of the anarchist Cipriano Mera battalion that has fought heroically. The road of Brihuega is about two kilometers, and to reach it I had to cross an open field. I tried to make it running, but an Italian plane saw me in the open. In seeing a... hare running, the scoundrels got the idea of chasing it. And they came down and began to machine-gun me. (What a

waste of ammunitions for a single hare. But perhaps they thought that I was carrying some dispatch, and they didn't want it to arrive at its destination.) To my luck, like many Spanish fields, that one had a small wall of loose stones that crossed it just in my direction, and when I would see the plane coming at me in the opposite direction, their machine gun shooting at me, and the bullets splatting against the stones, I would jump to the other side, and would repeat the same trick when they changed direction, the stones taking the bullets, receiving only minor wounds from the splinters, until from jump to jump I succeeded in reaching the protection of the woods. And finally, calm!

Alone in the woods under a beautiful sun in the sky, I was feeling so tired for those two days of continuous walking, that I stretched myself on the soft grass to rest, while in the sky the fascist planes began to show up again, followed by explosions, but at some distance. But suddenly, there got hold of me a kind of anxiety about my security.

“And if one of these bombs falls on me?... It would be my end. Poor Brand!” I added aloud, a little satirical. “Such a fine guy and without anybody knowing it, here lost in the woods... So sad for him!”

It seems ridiculous! Not death, but the idea of dying without anybody knowing it raised in me a kind of terror in my spirit, a terror that until then had not entered my mind, as generally the nearer the danger, the less impression it registers with me.

In a hurry I marched away, until at a distance of a hundred yards I heard an explosion, and it seemed to me that it happened just where I was lying down on the grass... Was it just my imagination?

I went out of the woods in a hurry, and when I arrived at the Brihuega road I stopped under a tree in the company of a French gunner who had to run from his battery because the enemy had pinpointed it and was trying to destroy it.

“If they succeed,” the French comrade tells me, “it will be the end of the glorious history of these cannons, which are a relic of the

first World War, sent to us by Stalin, thanks to the tons of gold we have given him... And also our end!"

AN ITALIAN PRISONER

I had come back to Madrid and I had slept just three or four hours, when Hilda Orobón came to look for me.

"Come immediately to the War Ministry. There is something urgent to do."

And there we went. Comrade Salgado (all of whose functions I now know: Chief of the Second Section of the General Staff of Madrid, and at the same time, Political Secretary of the Regional Propaganda Committee of the Confederated Defense—it makes me dizzy just to think of so many titles) tells me:

"Listen, *Americano*. It would be good to go to the front with that sergeant we captured yesterday, to speak to the fascist soldiers with the loudspeaker at the front."

Naturally, although I am dead tired I accept to return. The fascist sergeant is a twenty-four year old youngster, a student, who had already had fourteen months in the campaign in Abyssinia. He says that in leaving Abyssinia they were told that they were going to Italy, and instead they were brought to Spain. Although betrayed, there was nothing that they could do about it, because they are part of the regular army, and had to obey or be shot. So he says. And how much of it is the truth, and how much fear? He is very nervous, because they have told him that the "reds" kill the prisoners; and although I say to him that I only want to take him to the front to speak to his comrades in order to tell them that we don't brutalize the prisoners, and still less kill them, still he doesn't seem persuaded. After all I'm taking him out all alone... and it is night. And I'm armed... But during the trip in the truck with the loudspeaker, we two alone, I succeed in calming him. After all, if I wanted to get rid of him, I didn't have to take him so far.

We pass Guadalajara, and then Torijo, where they tell us that the front is now only a few kilometers away. At a certain point we

meet Mario of the Garibaldi Battalion, who takes us to the place nearer to the fascist lines. We figure that as we begin talking, the fascists will open up with their fire, and for that reason, in order to be a little protected and not to be forced to cut short the broadcast, we set ourselves up where the trees are more dense, so that we have some protection. A curious thing, now that the prisoner has calmed, it seemed that now he was finding pleasure in surprising his comrades with the little speech I had prepared for him during the trip, with his collaboration, in order to make more impression on the minds of his comrades. And while we two are inside at the chosen spot, Mario and a militiaman left for a moment, and then they returned with a new prisoner who had been sent out patrolling, and (while he thought that he was still in his lines), he met Mario in the darkness, who asks him:

“Ehi! What are you seeking?”

“Company number three.”

“It is here. Come with us.” And they took him to us.

My prisoner had just read the first few lines of the little speech, when from the fascist lines the shooting started in the direction of our voice, some bullets hitting the trees, some others, the truck, luckily leaving us unhurt, as inside we were somewhat protected. Mario and the prisoner went away, while to the bullets of the machine guns followed some mortar shot... We returned without any further incident, the prisoner happy that the adventure had ended so well. And finally I was able to continue my interrupted sleep.

FOLLOWING THE FOOTPRINT OF THE GLORIOUS ARMY OF MUSSOLINI

The telegram from the Great Duce said: “I receive aboard the *Pola*, sailing toward Libya, the news of the great battle being fought in the direction of Guadalajara. I follow the action of the great battle with firm spirit, because I am sure that the great impetus and tenacity of our legionnaires will win over the resistance of the enemy. To

following the footprint of the glorious army of mussolini

crush the international forces will be a triumph of great military and also political valor. I let the legionnaires know that I'm following their actions hour by hour, which will be crowned by victory. Signed: MUSSOLINI."

We also have wanted to follow, in person, instead of following in the style of the heroic Mussolini (who was playing the hero in the security of a faraway ship) the incidents of the battle (after a good sleep) in the direction of Sigüenza, instead of Guadalajara, which was in the opposite direction. And if the legionnaires of the Duce continued to advance in this way, instead of arriving in Madrid, they will arrive at Zaragoza, already occupied by Franco, and in the contrary direction of Mussolini's desire.

From Torija to Brihuega we find the signs of the second disaster of Mussolini's troops; abandoned guns, mortars, rifles, machine guns and an infinite number of cases of ammunition, etc, etc. I was admiring such tremendous booty, when the war correspondent of a telegraphic American agency, and also correspondent of a great English daily approached me.

"I am Gorrell," he tells me.

"Ah! I recall your adventures. You have been expelled from Italy by Mussolini, and also you have been made a prisoner by Franco in Sesena. Congratulations for being still here, sane and safe, to contemplate the triumph of the glorious troops of your great... friend Mussolini."

"The great clown!"

We advance together, and soon we are in view of Brihuega. There are cnorpse everywhere, still unburied for lack of time. Our militiamen had captured the hills at the South, and from there they had descended, attacking the fascist forces with great violence; and the fascists, seeing themselves lost, fled and didn't stop until they were twelve or thirteen kilometers away, abandoning an enormous quantity of war material. But they didn't forget to take with them the money and the objects of value which they had stolen from the

population of Brihuega, which they had conquered eight days before. In the eight days that they occupied it, the Spanish Falange shot seven people, as they follow the fascists in doing the work of the hangmen.

A man and a woman came to us. Gorrell presents them to me. The man is Matthews, war correspondent of the *New York Times*, and the woman is a Norwegian journalist who is writing the history of the Taelman Battalion. The four of us enter Brihuega, and we proceed until we arrive in front of the church in the square. We speak to the people still terrorized by the fascist experience, and now overjoyed to be again free.

In leaving Brihuega we meet Benito, political commissar of the Cipriano Mara division, our comrade. Aside, I tell him who are the persons in my company, and of their great importance in informing the public opinion of the world. So he invites us all to go to eat at the General Staff of the division, which is the one that conquered Brihuega.

All around us, in the fields, there was an enormous quantity of war material abandoned by the fleeing Italians.

“It is a rout! It is a rout!” Matthews continues to repeat, while Gorrell and the Norwegian woman agreed. “A major defeat!”

But they remained a little incredulous about the quantity of the booty, that our comrade, in his enthusiasm, calculated in seven hundred trucks, full. After calculating the 1,000 10.5 Howitzers taken, the thousands of 5.5 and other calibers, the 2,000,000 projectiles, guns, etc, we came to the conclusion that in that sector of the front the booty must be about two hundred trucks.

The General Headquarters is in a dairy farm, and after the presentation of Cipriano Mera to the journalists, and the journalists to Cipriano Mera and his staff, a magnificent dinner was improvised nearby, all happy for the great victory against the fascists. While we were talking, at the end of the dinner, Matthews and Gorrell disappear, and unseen they pay the owner thirty-five *pesetas* for the dinner for all, including the commander of the division. How little our

journalists know the psychology of the Spanish people. All of them looked very insulted, the three journalists being their guests. I, knowing the generosity of my comrades, was smiling. The two journalists had to take back the thirty-five *pesetas*... to wash out the offense, and have everybody laughing again. Then, in a moment of pause, Matthews and Gorrell took me aside, and begged me to ask them if it was possible to find some eggs; in their hotel they didn't have any. I passed their request to the comrades, and they explained to me that it wouldn't be easy to find them as in that sector the population was rather reactionary, to the point that at the last elections the rightist parties obtained 657 votes, while, the left got only 17. "But we'll try to find some." The journalists were waiting to know what the comrades were saying.

"What, do they say? What do they say?" they asked me. I explained the situation to them.

"Ah! Then goodbye eggs!"

"Not so soon. In an emergency case the anarchists are very persuasive... They will go searching for them."

After waiting fifteen minutes the captain arrived with ten dozen eggs.

"So many?" exclaimed, Matthews, incredulous. "These are too many, these are too many," respond the three journalists, looking at the eggs with great desire.

"Let's divide them among all," suggests Gorrell.

"Don't even think that," answers the photographer of *Castilla Libre*, who has just arrived.

"Well," I tell them, "now you have eggs for a whole colony of journalists... which I hope will remind you that the anarchists also exist in the war." And while we all go off satisfied, I ask Matthews:

"And Hemingway, what is he doing in Madrid?"

"Drinking Spanish champagne at one dollar a bottle."

"And tell me, how is it that you journalists of the great dailies speak so rarely of the anarchist fighting men, as if the war against the

fascists were made all by the communists, who after all are only a small minority?"

"It is because the communists give us more information."

And it is a fact. The communists are masters in appropriating to themselves the glory of the other fighters as if it were their glory, thanks to their ability in appropriating the means of communication, while anarchists, particularly the Spanish, rarely have understood the importance of propaganda in foreign countries. And in this way, in the press in general, when they are mentioned, it is only to criticize them, because their adversaries or enemies are those who give the information to the foreign press. And our people are on all fronts heroically fighting and sacrificing themselves, and nobody speaks of this, as if they have not been those who hindered the Francoists, at the beginning, from becoming the masters of Spain.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FEDERICA MONTSENY

I didn't personally know Federica Montseny, but she had collaborated in *Eresia*.

"Federica, I am a comrade from New York."

"I already know who you are. How are you?"

"I would like to speak with you a while, but I must depart immediately with this comrade of the General Staff, because tomorrow I go back to Madrid."

"Then come to see me in Valencia,"

"I will. Tomorrow. *Salud!*"

Therefore today I presented myself at the Ministerio de Sanidad. At the door the militia, today a soldier after the militarization, asked me:

"Who do you want to see?"

"The minister."

"All right. Do you have weapons?"

an interview with federica montseny

“I have only a Colt that I have brought from America.”

“Leave it. You will pick it up when you come out.”

There are a dozen people who are waiting. The soldier invites me to write in a note the reason of my visit. I write: “Brand, interview.” The note is carried to the *Ministra de Sanidad*, and after few minutes I enter, the *Ministra* shaking my hand with effusion.

“Did you wait long?”

“Just two minutes.”

“Sit down and wait so that I can fix things with these comrades.”

They are Italians from the aviation camp, and they inform her of the arrest of four of them: two anarchists and two republicans, and they were not told of the motive. Federica telephones the Minister of Justice, comrade García Oliver, to say that he should investigate. This will be arranged soon, promises the *Ministra de Sanidad*. The comrades leave satisfied.

“Well, now that I am speaking with the *Ministra*,” I start, “I would like your answer, like a comrade.”

“I’ll do that.”

“What function do you have, exactly?”

“Before it was that of public health, and now to my ministry has been added other functions. That of getting homes for children; to try to eliminate prostitution, by giving to these unfortunate women the means of earning their living in different ways; to create blood hospitals; rehabilitate the invalids; in a word, take care of the functions of social assistance, that today we do, not as a charity, but as a duty of social hygiene.”

“The other time I was here, seventeen years ago, in the streets there was an army of beggars of many classes while now...”

“You have seen that they don’t exist anymore. There is no more reason for it.”

“What did you do with them?”

“We give them shelter, food and sleeping place as long as they

need them.”

“Let’s go now to the political question. How did you decide your entry into the government?”

“Through a laborious process. In the first three months of the war we of the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist workers’ organization, had decided to remain outside a fight from our position of the realization of all that we could of our aspiration. But then Companys, the head of the *Generalidad* of Cataluna, told us that either we accepted the responsibility into the *Generalidad* or he would resign and go away. And as at that moment, due to the external situation, as well as internal, it wasn’t prudent to break with the petty bourgeoisie, we were forced to come to a compromise. It was in this way that we constituted the Council of Defense in which we were represented in the government of the *Generalidad*.”

“And how did you enter the government of Madrid?”

“When the socialists and the communists decided to force the resignation of Giral’s government, they insisted that our organization had to be represented. We refused and declared that we were disposed to join them if they abolished the government, and in its place put a Council of Defense. I, especially, was against the last moment in entering the government. But the international situation was delicate. They made us observe that if we abolished the government, then in Spain only one government would exist, and this would have been that of Burgos, the one of Franco. This situation would have served England and France in recognizing the fascist government, and to intervene in its favor. Besides, whether it called itself Council of Defense or any other name, it was still a government. And for that reason, why did we have to meet difficulties for a simple question of name? The logic of this argument and other reasons for the preservation of our movement made us decide to assume our governmental responsibility. However, we didn’t enter without imposing our conditions, among them that of the federal principle of the provinces, the autonomy of the municipalities, and administrative decentralization. Finally, if we win, which is

an interview with federica montseny

what we all wish, there is all the probability that Spain will constitute itself as a Federalist Socialist Republic, with the municipalities as a cell of a socialized economy, naturally federated among themselves, and the two syndical organizations, which include the total of the organized workers controlling the process of production and distribution.”

“Now tell me frankly, in your opinion, in the future, will anarchists have to abandon their anti-parliamentary and anti-governmental principles? I want to say, since we participate already in the government, do you counsel as a good tactic, that we should go to the conquest of power... in order to realize our anti-state principles?”

“Absolutely not!”

“Then are you for remaining strictly anti- governmental in normal periods, but disposed to assume places in the government in revolutionary periods?”

“Yes, to hinder the sabotaging of the revolution.”

“A last question, Federica, since you are very busy. And this question is not very delicate.”

“Shoot!”

“You know like me that as anarchists we maintain the theory that power corrupts even the best intentioned persons. Now do you want to tell me in what proportion you are already corrupted by power?”

“*Hombre*, I don’t feel at all corrupted by power,” she says, smiling.

“How can this infraction of the rule be explained?”

“In a very simple way. I am entirely controlled by the CNT and the same for our other ministers. The organization can take us away from here any time. We don’t make any important decision in the Counsel of Ministers without first consulting our organization. It has the power, not us. Without it, we count for nothing! You can say that!”

“I will!”

And we separated.

CONVERSING WITH DIEGO ABAD DE SANTILLÁN

For the last two months I have wanted to visit my old friend Santillán. The urgency of different activities in which our comrades live, and my anxiety to visit first the battle fronts forced me to postpone this visit to one of the most representative men in our movement. Today, again in Barcelona, I have the opportunity of visiting our comrade.

I find Santillán installed in a luxurious villa. I find it useless to ask him to whom it belonged, since I already know the answer. To some Count, to that Marquis, bankers and millionaires I have seen in Spain, previously crushing the working people without pity. So many houses expropriated from counts, marquis, bankers or ministers, etc, that it gives me the impression that Spain was inhabited only by these birds of prey.

Santillán is conversing with three comrades of the front, since our comrade, without being minister, is still political commissar. The discussion is about the formation of some assault battalion with modern weapons which would be made in our own machine shops.

“Then there are arms?” I ask him.

“Still few. But we are shaping up well.”

“Is it true that the government of Valencia is not very generous with the Aragón front?”

“It is true. Because if we had obtained arms and money at the beginning of the revolution. Cataluña could have put 100,000 men under arms, decided in putting a fast end to the military uprising. That is what we proposed to the Giral government in Madrid, before the Largo Caballero cabinet was formed. Giral had accepted our proposition, giving the order to put at our disposal the means for our armament; but before this could be put into action, the Giral cabinet fell, and the armament for Cataluña went up in smoke. Then they

didn't want that Cataluña should win the war, because this would have spread the Cataluña example to all of Spain."

"Do you make many arms in Cataluña?"

"Not as many as we need, and we could manufacture."

"We have heard that the central government besides not being generous with weapons for the front of Aragón, is also stingy with the money of the Bank of Spain in order to make industry in Cataluña march."

"There was a period in which we were lacking everything," Santillán says. "Material for the manufacture of arms, and money to pay the workers who were working in it. After asking help from the government without any practical result, we began fabricating our own money in order to resolve this problem. We were reproached by the government, because this threatened to lower the value of our money abroad. But as we didn't have any other way we declared that we were disposed to continue to print money. Then we have arrived at an agreement with the central government in the financing of our industry, although in an insufficient way."

The comrades from the front departed. Santillán shows me the model of a new machine gun which is "a jewel," he says. "The voice of Cataluña will speak."

While remaining alone, we go back to our memories of Argentina, back to the year 1921, in that little room where we were three friends: Santillán, Kurt Wilckens, and I. Kurt Wilckens, the heroic German comrade who would pass to history as a proletarian martyr for having executed one of the grandest slaughterers of Argentine workers: colonel Varela, the assassin of more than 1,500 working people, in great part anarchists, in the faraway region of Patagonia.

We remembered a lot of comical scenes of that period, when a few days after I had arrived in Buenos Aires we met, casually, working both for a carpenter who was a comrade; Santillán the impromptu carpenter, who didn't know that our boss was a comrade, and I a

mechanical lather and also impromptu carpenter, who had to teach the... supposed carpenter how to saw the wood in order to build a shelf in a store. And the comical part of it is that we managed our task pretty good. But after a few days, the job finished, we found ourselves both unemployed, because the comrade didn't have any more work, and Santillán and I did not know where to find our next meal. Later on he went to Germany, and we did not again meet until today. And it is a pleasure, after all these years, to meet again an old friend, although in seeing him in a picture in company with other counselors I didn't recognize him. He had put on weight.

“Tell me, *amigo*. I see that you are no more as thin as you were at the time we used to eat so little in Argentina. Well... did they make you minister, because you are fat or are you fat because you are minister?”

“I leave it to you to reveal the mystery,” he answers, laughing.

“A lot has been spoken of the ‘martyrdom’ of power, of the ‘cross’ of all those in power, and of its horrifying ‘Calvary’! Have your sufferings been many?” I continue... inexorable.

“They almost made me a... martyr.”

“However from what I see from your... florid appearance, your sufferings can’t have become unbearable.”

“There was a period,” Santillán confesses, “in which I arrived at such a state of excitement, that sometimes when they called me on the phone I used to answer, enraged: ‘Hell! There are no more places for shirkers!’”

“Ah! It was precisely because they had warned me of this fury of yours, that I avoided phoning you when you were counselor.”

“Frankly, I tell you, that was a real epidemic! They almost made me crazy! There were people who imagined that in that place I could solve anything.”

“The halo of power was fluttering over your head!”

“Yes, and people were coming to me like they would go to a miraculous sanctuary, forming lines outside of my office waiting for

a whole day, one day up to three hundred people, for counsel, a note, a service. Imagine that I had even to marry people! If I didn't burst, I don't know why. In that is the miracle!"

"After this I suppose that you were tired of the place of minister of economy, or whatever it is."

"Of that I had to occupy myself against my will. My only thought, now, is the war. It is my main concern. To win the war."

"It is the concern of every one of us," I say, "to win the war and the revolution."

"The war, the war," answers, rapidly, Santillán. "As with that, we have won the revolution."

"Perhaps," I continue. "If the other... brotherly parties don't play us a dirty trick. We have just to observe all the maneuvers they play against the anarchists, particularly in the provinces where they dominate, and the persecutions. It is clear that we ourselves play a little politics... but not dirty. Our fault," I add, "is that we sin of too much naiveté and frankness, like giving, for example, the other parties parity in the Catalan Counsel, when they don't even have half of the people we have."

"We have wanted to give an example of generosity, unselfishness," he says.

"To the politicians?... Example wasted. To teach unselfishness to politicians is to make them laugh at our naiveté. And that is why they take advantage of our tolerance."

"When the war will be over then all this will also finish," declares our friend. "Too bad that the situation of anarchism in Cataluña," I remind him, "makes you forget some times that not all Spain is Cataluña. We have to push as much as possible for practical realizations."

"It is precisely what has been done and we are doing. And this is forgotten in order to talk of politics. The base of every thing is the economy. And what is there, that remains of the bourgeois economy?"

"Very little from what I have ascertained."

"Then?" continues Santillán. "Who continuously speaks of

the revolution that has stopped? Here we don't have capitalists, bankers, and big land proprietors any more. And we pay a minimum of rent, until the lodgings will be municipalized entirely. Isn't this a revolution? And who can stop us from doing more? Not power, because power doesn't have the strength to stop us. If we don't make more, it is the fault of the workers' organizations, not because a government exists. Haven't we collectivized the land of the large owners and of all those who exploited working people? Didn't we suppress the power of the bank? This is the most complete work. And with having done this, and won the war against fascism, if we couldn't do more I think that our generation will have done enough."

"Then," I insinuate, "if somebody thinks that the social revolution isn't done yet, it will be because they start from the concept of an absolute communism? And naturally all what is not this, for them it is a lost revolution?"

"For me," states our friend, "as long as bourgeois exploitation is suppressed, it is sufficient. Whether here we live in communism, and there collectivism, I don't care."

It gave me pleasure to hear comrade Santillán speak in this way, because this is the way we conceive anarchism. Let everybody build the free society according to his pleasure.

"Don't think that I have arrived at this conclusion now," adds Santillán. "It is quite some time that I think like this."

"Too bad that this large interpretation of anarchism is so reduced among the comrades."

"Doctrinaire intransigence and lack of practical experience," explains Santillán. "Reality teaches us to live. And to be more tolerant with the way other people think. And it will be the result of this practical experience that it will win for this, or other forms of productive organizations of social life, the sympathy of the masses."

The conversation passed to other subjects, that the lack of space stops me from mentioning. We had finished eating a simple lunch in the company of various comrades. I got ready to leave the ex-Counselor

of Economy of the Generalidad of Cataluña, comrade Diego Abad de Santillán, convinced that power had not changed his anti-state principles.

“However, what about the psychological influence that power has impressed on you?” I added before leaving him. “Since you and others of our comrades have occupied various governmental positions, I have asked myself with anxiety what power would do to all of you. Will you become traitors? Will they create for themselves new interests? Will they pass to the other side of the barricade? I asked myself full of fear. Since I have come to Spain I have been studying in you the signs of this possible transformation and degeneration. And what have I found? Some signs of weakness in certain individuals, but in general—and I feel very happy about it—the comrades in the representative places seem to have preserved themselves, sound of feelings and of mind. No, it seems to me that power—at least until now—hasn’t corrupted you. And I rejoice immensely, otherwise even our philosophy would not be incorruptible.”

“From what I have observed in myself, your observation is correct,” assures Santillán. “From what I know, power didn’t change my feelings. I am the same as always, and nothing gives me the right to state that the other comrades in the places they occupy, don’t feel as anarchists in their actual positions as they have always been.”

Is it the great hatred that we anarchists feel for authority that immunizes us, so to say, against the corrupting influence of Power?... If this were the result obtained by anarchism it would already be a great thing for martyred humanity, and for its liberation.

WHEN THE MOON SHINES IT IS A NIGHT OF TEARS IN MADRID

Night of moon, romantic night! So sing the poets and so sigh the lovers! But a night of moon in Madrid is a night of tragedy, a night of sadness, a night of terror!

When the moon shines over the silent city the people tremble

and repeat with anxiety:

“This night the black birds will come, the birds of death will throw their murderous load on to the martyred city!”

And each asks: “Will it be tonight? Will it be my loved one?... Will it be me?”

And the damsel will press into the robust arms of her lover in an embrace of fear and tenderness. Will it be the last dream of love and happiness that will flower from the heart of the young woman who has just begun to live?

The mother embraces her children, faced with the terror of losing them... “Ah!” she asks herself, “will this flesh of my flesh perhaps soon be buried under the ruins, dead? Lying under the ruins of this same house where we have sought safety, and instead we have found a grave?...” Ah! Who can know all the sad thoughts, all the fears that will cross the minds of this unhappy people, who live continuously under a volcano of fire, which in each moment can swallow them?

A night of moon in Madrid is a night of tears!

I walk in the deserted streets and think of the words of that mother telling her son while they were running in the street this afternoon.

“Come, come, my son,” she was telling him. “Look up there that arrive those fascist birds of prey which come to kill nice and innocent children like you. Run! Run! My baby!”

“Mother, mother! What are those bursts that I hear?”

“They are the bombs that those assassins throw down!”

“What the bombs?”

“Ah! why do you ask me so many questions in this moment? I’ll explain it to you later. Now run my baby, run, or we will not arrive in time at the shelter!”

And taking in her arms the little boy who could not run any more, with all the strength that she still had she ran in search of a safe place to hide. How many of them only ran toward death?... By now it is useless to talk about this, as tragedy repeats itself continuously.

Now it is 11 o'clock at night and all the doors, all the windows are hermetically closed. There is not a single light in the city... except the one they say that the good God has put there in the sky for the joy and the dreams of human beings. But when through the shutters not well lowered a ray of light is seen a shot is heard. It is the militiaman that is watching.

"What is happening, comrade?" I ask him.

"These lunatics, with the lights! As if they wanted to call the bombs!"

"And I thought that you were shooting at the moon!"

"If I could, I would put it out with a bullet. We are not for dreams, damn it!"

"Who?"

"The moon, comrade, the moon!"

And yet I look at her without rancor. Her face is, as ever, smiling. It is grotesque, but not inimical.

The whistles of the guards are insistently heard announcing to the sleepers that death is approaching. Others in the houses pick up the alarm and pass it to the neighbors. Hurried steps are heard on the stairs; shadows are seen through the crystals of the doors, descending rapidly toward the shelters. And inarticulate murmurs, words and shouts cross each other in the darkness. A silhouette creeps near the shade of the houses; others squat in a corner that offers some protection. I don't know why, the danger that thunders in space doesn't succeed in shaking a kind of stupor which has invaded my being in this romantic night.

I find myself in Velázquez street. There are benches that invite one to sit. It is a night that announces spring. I don't know why the perfume of violets comes back to my nostrils while the noise of the enemy's planes comes ever more near. I look at the moon. The face is the same that I have seen for more than forty years. Unchangeable to

our sight, she follows her way smiling. And in spite of that, how many changes, how many... tragedies have followed each other on the face of the earth! How many changes in the life of the people! There have never been so many radical changes in the destiny of humanity; its form of thinking and in its form of living as in these forty-three years since I have opened my eyes on this great stage of the world.

Unconsciously I realize that some object has come between me and the moon. They are two enemy planes, two birds of bad luck which go sowing death in their passage. And yet in the transparency of the sky they seem so minute, so insignificant, so innocent...

Romantic night?... With a symphony of bombs!

Already the dream is gone. I walk, sadness in my soul. Cursed be you, who want to live on the sweat of other men! This death is yours!

Puerta del Sol. In its tower 12 o'clock rings. Midnight! The hour that ghosts go for a walk... Ah! the dead come out of their graves!... Are they also unhappy in their other world?

Come, sacrificed mothers and children! Raise your fists to the sky! Where are the gods to whom you pray so much?

Cursed be the men who created them! It is the terror that instills their vengeance, that keeps me enslaved!

Night of moon, romantic night!... Tragedy passes over Madrid!

THE REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE OF BARCELONA IN ARMS

Barcelona had just finished its siesta. Everything seemed peaceful, but the dagger of the traitors was getting ready to strike. Treacherously! The counterrevolution has emerged from its den...

“Alert, comrades!”

It is the warning that runs like lightning among the anarchists of Barcelona.

“The counter-revolution has to be crushed!” continues the

shout of alarm, and all ready their weapons.

I run toward the Telefónica. It is there that the traitors have chosen to strike. The Telefónica occupies one corner of the Plaza de Cataluña. In front of its door there are *Guardias de Asalto*. Others occupy the grand floor and the mezzanine. They had tried also to occupy the higher floors, but the comrades working there have realized the treachery, and repulsed the attack, although the *Guardias de Asalto* had already reached the sixth floor before the comrades had discovered the betrayal. And so the *Guardias de Asalto* were able to occupy only a part of the building. Soon cars and trucks full of comrades arrive ready to defend the revolution. The Guardia de Asalto don't dare to stop a number of them from going inside the Telefónica to reinforce the comrades who defend themselves. Others take positions in front of the edifice ready to give battle. And their number is increasing each minute.

Some shots are heard we don't know where. The counter-revolution had a hundred heads. However inside the building, the *Guardias* have dropped their provocative attitude, while about one hundred guards occupy the edifice in front. The counter-revolution was well organized.

Revolvers in their hands, outside, the comrades try to send away the curious people in order not to cause useless victims in case of battle.

However anger is in every heart. At the Generalidad in realizing that the coup has not succeeded it is said that they are seeking to settle the incident. However the comrades don't believe that.

Meanwhile the proletarian wardens are in alarm. Attempts are made to avoid provocation. The interviews that were held in Paris among political elements of various parties and pseudo-revolutionaries with two so-called democratic powers, in complicity with that other nation that for shame (of the revolution) still calls itself "fatherland of working people", in order to strangle the revolution, are well known to the revolutionary proletarians of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT.

Toward evening, a settlement is reached between our orga-

nizations and the Generalidad. The *Guardias de Asalto* will leave the Telefónica, and then the question of its technical control will be settled peacefully. This firm belongs to foreign capital and it isn't convenient to expropriate it now in order to avoid international complications. The workers' organizations, that is, the CNT and UGT control only its operations, and an agreement would not have been difficult. But one party or parties did not want an agreement, therefore the provocation, with the loss of blood.

The Day of May 4

Thinking that everything would be settled, the greater part of the comrades who had rushed there, armed, went back to their houses or district; others remained to watch, because some shooting was going on, although it was impossible to find out who was doing the shooting. Perhaps the fascists.

However as the dawn arrived the shooting intensified and quickly spread to most of the city, as well from our side, as from the part of our enemies. And the *Guardias de Asalto* reoccupied the grand floor renewing the provocation. They have fired already on comrades, causing some victims among them. The anarchists, then, threw themselves in the street to give battle to the counter-revolution, and Barcelona was covered with barricades.

As soon as I heard the spreading of the shooting I went from street to street to get an idea of how things were shaping up. Early in the morning the firing was not so intense as to hinder movement entirely. With some danger it was still possible to pass from barricade to barricade. But there were already quite a number of fatalities. The hidden fascists also were shooting at the anarchists.

In the Paseo de Gracia, la Plaza de Cataluña, las Ramblas and the surrounding streets, everywhere there was an atmosphere of tragedy. Guns, bombs could be seen everywhere. Everybody was getting ready to give battle, our comrades still observing an attitude of waiting. And when the provocations multiplied on the part of the

government forces, republicans and Marxists, particularly communists, our comrades answered fire with fire.

The Face of the Counter-Revolution

By 10 o'clock the struggle had already taken a bloody character. Barcelona looked like a battlefield. Pistols, rifles, machine guns—these last practically all on the side of the police—were firing in every direction. From one side and the other wounded and dead were falling, and the ambulances were running to pick them up, no matter who they were. From our side as well as from the part of our adversaries there was fighting for positions. I, to get a clear idea of the situation, at least in the center of the city where the shooting was concentrated, cautiously circulated jumping from door to door, trying to protect myself from the bullets as well as I could, sometime finding myself among our enemies, where I see the new machine guns just arrived from Russia. The counter-revolution had organized itself well in order to crush the anarchists in Barcelona. But they had forgotten the courage of the anarchists.

The anarchists had been accused of organizing the conflict, but what is the truth? Here it is.

Ayguadé of Esquerra Republicana... counselor of Public Order, gave orders to Rodrigo Salas, communist, to go with the *Guardias de Asalto* to occupy the Telefónica. Was this in accord with the other parties or of his own initiative? Ayguadé, interrogated, denied having given such orders to Salas, while Companys, interrogated also, declared that he knew nothing of this. If this were true, the revolt against the legitimate government would be reduced to a revolt against the communist Salas, individual provocateur, on behalf of his party.

However, both Ayguadé and Companys were lying when they declared that they knew nothing of the provocation of the communist Salas. The three were perfectly in accord, demonstrating that

instead of an anarchist plot against the government, this has turned out, instead, to be a communist and republican plot against the anarchists.

Truce on the Fighting

In the afternoon García Oliver, anarchist, Minister of Justice in the central government came from Valencia in company with Mariano Vázquez, secretary of the National Committee of the CNT, with the secretary of the UGT seeking an accord.

An order is given on both sides to cease the shooting, which was realized in part. But the provocations against the anarchists didn't cease entirely. If somebody alone was detained in the street by our adversaries and found on them the book of the CNT or FAI, they tore them to bits or arrested them, while in other places the shooting and killing of our comrades continued. Some of them were killed with explosive bullets, as the fascists do on the front.

After 10 o'clock in the morning, I succeeded in reaching the house of the CNT-FAI. It was practically without communication with the other part of the city, because on one side, in Via Durruti, there is the Police Prefecture, and on the other side, both a block distance, there is a syndicate of the UGT, besides the Generalidad nearby. The worst horrors were committed by the *Guardias de Asalto* in front of this syndicate, helped by elements of the FSUC (communist) who were shooting together. Every comrade of ours who passed there was assassinated. We from the building of the CNT-FAI (impotent at the sight of these murders) were looking stealthily from the windows without being able to defend our comrades, because we could not see the assassins. That band of criminals could also have been the one which assassinated Berneri and Barbieri, from whom at that moment we didn't have any news; and it was precisely the shooting of these murderers that was hindering us from going to see how they were doing, Berneri having refused to come to the house of the CNT-FAI

at the beginning, thinking that where they were, there was no danger.

The Day of May 5

This is the day that caused the most victims, because the counter-revolutionaries didn't observe the truce. And besides they were armed with the best weapons, particularly the communists who were in possession of the best that were coming from Russia, paid with gold. The dead are a few hundred, and the wounded a thousand from each side. With each volley we heard we knew that some of our comrades were being killed.

In the afternoon, worried by what could have happened to Berneri and Barbieri, I convinced the Spanish comrades of the necessity of going, to see if they were in danger, and to try to bring them to us; because if attacked, we were in a better situation to defend ourselves. However, although they were not far from us, in the street where we were, we had to pass various houses occupied by our enemies with whom we were exchanging some shots, by surprise, as we could not expose ourselves at the windows, being also under siege, and the comrades who were being assassinated under our own eyes perhaps were on their way to come to help us. We did not know how to notify them not to come near. And the small square where Berneri and Barbieri were living was also occupied by our enemies.

Now, on foot, we knew that we could not reach them, but in our yard we had two armed trucks, and we decided to go with those. I also wanted to go in one of them, but when I tried to go in, one of the comrades asked me:

“And where is your rifle?”

“I have this pistol.”

“The way the enemy is placed, that would be useless. Remain. And besides there is only room for us.”

And so they went out, and as soon as they were in the street, the others began to shoot at them from every direction. Not only that, they began to throw grenades, against which they had no de-

fense, because from the inside they could not see who was throwing the grenades at them. So they did not succeed in reaching the little square, as inside the improvised tank they were like in a cage. And even if they would have reached Berneri and Barbieri, they would never have been able to come out of the house without being killed. So they were forced to turn around and come back. When back in our yard the comrades came out from the two armed cars bleeding from various wounds caused by the splinters of the grenades that came through the gaps of the iron plate.

The Murderers at Work

Meanwhile the assassination of our comrades in front of the syndicate of the UGT was continuing, and we were desperate in our inability to warn the comrades of the danger, since we could not know from which direction they were coming. At a certain moment in hearing a volley of bullets, cautiously we looked out of one window. Two cars loaded with comrades had stopped in front of those murderers, who not seen by us, must have given to them the order to come out of the cars. Three of the comrades had already come out, their hands up, when a volley of bullets cut them down. One of them was only wounded, because he was still moving on the ground. But the assassins finished them with various other volleys. And on the Aragón front they needed bullets to face the fascists, but in Barcelona the counter-revolutionaries had plenty to assassinate the anarchists... who were supposed to be their allies. In the autos were more comrades, but before they had time to defend themselves, they were also assassinated. Cowardly! We phoned the ambulance to come to pick up our dead, but they answered that they could not do it because they were being shot at also. Meanwhile the bodies of our comrades remained on the ground or in the cars. It was half an hour later—perhaps notified by the assassins themselves, because the corpses hindered them from murdering more of our people—that the ambulance came to pick them up.

the murderers at work

A little later, another car with three comrades passed. They were ordered by the murderers to halt, but they didn't stop until they had turned the corner a few yards from the assassins. There they stopped, jumped out of the car, and took refuge in a door. The assassins tried to come near, but we started an intense fire to protect them; until one of our... tanks, challenging the bombs, went to pick them up and bring them to us. One of them was wounded, fortunately not badly.

At this point I decided to go out in the street. I could do that by passing through a small alley where the shooting was not yet intense. I went for a couple of hours, avoiding the bullets as best as I could, in doors of houses, behind the vehicles parked in the streets, or behind any other protection or crossing streets at full speed. In the center of the city there was no street without shooting; behind the barricades, from doors, windows which looked into the streets, or from the roofs. The bullets were going or coming without interruption, more numerous on the part of the enemy who had more ammunitions.

But the people were not giving up, and on their part it was more a question of... courage, determination, than bullets. And the hatred which they had against the traitors who wanted to kill the revolution. I sometimes was among the comrades, some other times among the enemies, who more than once in seeing me when I stopped to watch them intensely, asked for my papers; and in showing them a permit to visit "all fronts" signed by Miaca in Madrid, they would let me go; I not daring to question them for fear that they would ask me where I was living, which was in a house expropriated by the anarchists, although at that moment I was sleeping in the house of the CNT-FAI, which was also expropriated, on mattresses on the ground in company of two comrades, a girl from England, and a girl from Holland, who also had come to Spain to participate in the revolutionary struggle. The reason that we were sleeping under an open window was firstly, because it was very warm, and secondly, because they would start shooting at us as soon as we would show our heads. And this we could not forget a single instant as bullets were coming to greet us.

When the evening of this day came an accord was signed to suspend the hostilities.

The Day of May 6

Very early, I go in the street. With some fear, the people begin to circulate. The shooting has ceased, but some shots can be heard. The underground fascists had a great time in these days of struggle. The republicans and communists, indirectly, found a great help in them. Openly, naturally, they could not be on their side, but the provocations of the police and of the communists continue. In the Gran Vía, in the Paseo de Gracia and in other parts of the city, the cars that passed with red and black flags are threatened with pointed guns, the occupants are ordered to descend with their hands up, they are arrested, and their cars are sequestered. Many passersby are searched, and if they find on them the book of the CNT, it is torn up. Faced with these continued provocations, the spirit of the comrades still on the barricades are very excited. The maneuvers of the enemies of the revolution who don't want the end of the conflict are clear. The comrades speak of giving them an ultimatum in order to put an end to these provocations, otherwise they would continue the struggle. Particularly the Libertarian Youth are running out of patience.

In the Ramblas I meet a group of these youths, who with pistols, guns, and hand bombs walk furiously toward the Plaza de Cataluña.

“Where are you going?” I ask them.

“To the Plaza de Cataluña.”

“Are you crazy?... You are going to put yourselves in the mouth of the wolf!”

“But don't you see that they continue to provoke us? They have to be stopped!”

I try to convince them to return to their barricades, but they are too furious to listen to me.

They continue toward the Plaza de Cataluña, and I go with

them in order to avoid a tragedy. We arrive at the end of the Ramblas, one of them gives the bombs and the pistol to the others and goes toward the groups of communist provocateurs, unarmed.

“If you don’t return, we start to shoot!” the youngsters shout to him as they let him go. And they place themselves facing the Plaza de Cataluña and the Hotel Colón—which is the Headquarters of the communists—with the temerity of youth.

The few passerby who were in the Ramblas—fearing a conflict—run to hide themselves in the main doors of the houses, while I, foreseeing the massacre of these comrades, almost force them to seek the protection of the trees of the Ramblas. Behind them, with their weapons pointed, they follow the vicissitudes of the other comrade who is seen disputing vehemently with the provocateurs. At the end he comes back with the promise that no more books of the organization will be destroyed.

In all our barricades and in those of the enemies there is great anxiety. There is truce, but the guns are ready, and nobody moves from his place of vigilance. Any incident can provoke a new massacre. The organizations and the parties continue to transmit the “Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!”

In the afternoon some shooting begins again, and this continues in part of the night, but ceases totally in the morning of the 7th. Our organizations continue to transmit to our places of vigilance not to answer to the provocations, with which orders few comrades agree.

At last, toward 5 o’clock in the morning, having reached an accord with the government of Valencia, the CNT-FAI and the Libertarian Youth give the order to the comrades to abandon the barricades and to go back to work.

The peace, a peace of distrust and rancor toward those who caused this tragedy, was re-established.

Now the wives of Berneri and Barbieri, whom we had not found in their rooms, came from Paris... We were very alarmed but could not find out what had happened to them. Immediately the two

wives and I began looking for them, suspecting the worst. After looking in various places among the prisoners, the wounded, and the dead, with no trace of them, we arrived in a hall where there were placed ten or twelve unidentified corpses. We scrutinized all of them, but we didn't recognize any. Then from one of two corpses close together, the wife of Barbieri recognized her husband by the pants he was wearing, and the wife of Berneri recognized her husband in the other corpse. Their faces were so disfigured by the beating they had received, obviously, that at the first look we didn't recognize them. My impression was they had been murdered, viciously, with blows. I don't know the rest, because next morning very early, I went back to Madrid to report to the Comrade abroad about the treachery that had been plotted against the anarchists in Barcelona, as it was only from Madrid that I had a... special way of sending out my articles... censored by myself alone.

THE PARTY OF FALSEHOOD AND GALLOWS

There is a political disease which so far I have rather treated with gloves, while I should have treated it with red hot steel. It is not of the church that I want to speak here. Its history of tortures, falsehoods, and crimes, particularly in the long ago past, is well known.

It is not even with fascism that I will occupy myself in this article. Fifteen years of fascism in Italy and four in Germany, and these ten months of fascism in a part of Spain: we know by now that this party is capable of all crimes and of all lies.

Here today I want to concern myself with another party, which in spite of its proclaimed anti-fascist and anti-nazist ideology, in its methods of struggling, its hypocrisy, in its sectarianism, in its ferocious hatred toward all those who oppose its plans of domination, and in its murderous brutality, isn't different from those criminal parties that are keeping Italy and Germany subjected.

It is of the Communist Party that I am speaking.

It is with a profound revulsion, and at the same time a deep indignation that I am forced to speak of the vile, murderous activity of this shameless party, and its treachery. The numerous experiences that we have just lived through in Barcelona, and the one that we are already suffering in Spain everywhere communism dominates; all its betrayals of the cause of the people; its open and shameless association with the most reactionary bourgeois elements in our Spain; the apology that it makes, for all its betrayal; the calculated confusion that it is creating in the proletarian ranks in order to swindle others for the dirty aims of its party, all against the interest of the working people; the continuous campaign of lies and calumnies that first understandingly—when the communists were still weak—and now ever more openly, against those that more than anybody else have given and are giving their blood and their lives for the triumph of the war and the revolution, in order to discredit them in the eyes of the people; and lastly the instigation to exterminate all those who don't want to accept the folly of wanting to impose on everyone their political line, make the Communist Party the competitors of the fascist parties mentioned, their methods being just an imitation of those, and vice versa.

We exaggerate? Let's take any of the communist publications which are published by them in Spain. It is so much hypocrisy, it is so much falsity, it is so much hatred and poison that fill all the lines of their papers against the anarchists, that if you have a minimum of decency you will be forced to leave the paper in order not to vomit from repugnance, mental and physical. In falseness, in shamelessness, in capacity to poison the popular environment, in ability to sow hatred among the people; in creating confusion with dirty maneuvers, while on their lips they have continuously the words "unity", "fraternity", "love for the proletarians", etc., they have surpassed the most clever Jesuits. If you are an honorable person, and you really love the cause of the people, don't take in your hands a communist paper, because you would get sick with indignation and disgust. To an anarchist such moral degradation is simply incomprehensible. This is what

is being felt by the one who right now is writing this who for reasons of obtaining information is forced to read some of these repulsive papers and then has to pass hours of torture asking himself:

“But how is it possible that there exist so-called human beings who are such hypocrites and so vile?” I think that even a saint would feel the desire to put a foot over the head of these vipers and crush them! And I’m no saint.

If the Communists in Spain were even only responsible for having destroyed that unity and fraternity which was established the 19th of July against fascism and capitalism, they would already have covered themselves with the crime of counter-revolutionarism. For many months, while the communists were weak, this unity had been maintained, and the united proletarians were marching in the crusade against fascism, and the building of a new society.

In those months the Communist Party was weak, paralytic, compared to the enormous forces of the CNT and the UGT and it was forced to march in unison with these two organizations. At that time its language was the language of the servant. And since the Communists didn’t have strength, harmony reigned among the working people, on the fighting fronts, in the factories, and in the fields, everywhere.

But already underneath the viper was moving. As with tricks and deceits the strength of the Communists was increasing in the UGT and among the Socialist Youth, it was also increasing their poisoning of the environment, and also the impertinence and violence of their attacks against the POUM and against the anarchists. After having absorbed the UGT in Cataluna, and having also taken possession of the JSU—“Unified Socialist Youth”, and after having succeeded in overthrowing the Largo Caballero government, which they didn’t find sufficiently servile to the will of Moscow, and built another one with elements who are the most reformist and counter-revolutionary existing in Spain, its virulence of language against the POUM and the anarchists has no limits; as likewise their counter-revolutionary

the party of falsehood and gallows

shamelessness has no limits.

They openly made themselves the defenders and the allies of the republican bourgeois parties, and even of the Catholic Church, to the point of asking the opening of the churches that were closed the 19th of July, not because they had become believers, but as a dirty political tactic in order to take possession ever more of power, with the aid of anyone, democratic or reactionary.

Particularly after having tried the counter-revolutionary coup in Barcelona, and having served as hangmen to the republicans in massacring people, the Communists, were asking first Largo Caballero, and now Prieto, to exterminate all those who oppose their abominable treason.

Now, finally, the Communist Party has taken off the mask. Screaming they ask for the heads of all those who oppose their dictatorship. And lies, and slander, and even murder (where and when they can) against those who disturb them in their Machiavellian machinations. And this in the best Stalinist style. For their greedy desire for power, they sacrifice half a million proletarian lives on the battle fields of the revolution.

It is enough to look at the eighty workers and peasants of the CNT assassinated in the last months in Castille by the communists, and the assassinations and tortures of the Cheka in Murcia, and the murder of Camillo Berneri and Barbieri, besides two hundred workers killed in Barcelona. The communists each day add provocation to provocation, assassination to assassination. No scruples stop them in their counter-revolutionary work. As in Russia, the Communist counter-revolution is marching.

In this very moment I receive *Castilla Libre* and in the first page I learn of a new murder of one of our comrades perpetrated by the Communists. The comrade assassinated is Francisco González Moreno, secretary of the CNT in Mascarate. The morning of Monday, May 24, two members of the Lister Brigade, in company of Valenciano Moreno Peralta of the Communist Party, mayor of the village, seized him to take

him to Mora de Toledo where there is a group of the brigade.

The 25th of the month, without any accusation, our comrade was shot behind the Church of Christ, where the communists had already assassinated sixty men and women belonging to the CNT. Those who assassinated our comrades declared that before being members of the Lister Brigade, they were communists, and they obeyed the orders of the Communist Party. A party of assassins' leaders.

ON THE ARAGÓN FRONT

If I didn't come before to this front it is because no action of importance was going on here. The cause? Lack of arms to start an offensive, because the government doesn't want the anarchists to win victories... which would damage the prestige of other parties. And for that the front of Aragón is starved of weapons where the anarchists are in great number. But this sabotage of arms has to end, because our comrades are losing their patience.

In a car of the Ascaso Division I come to this fighting front in company of Captain Fracassi. Captain Fracassi is no relative either near or far of the famous hero of Gautier. But like him he is a fighter, although not a poet, and he doesn't swim in romanticism. Besides he is from Milan, Italy, and prefers *risotto* to verse, although he doesn't scorn beautiful girls.

In this moment, though, he is in love with... horses, yes, horses. He is determined to create a force of cavalry, and any horse that he sees in the fields he wants to capture. But it seems that to the horses the idea of finding themselves under the fire of guns is not pleasing, and when Fracassi comes near them... they run. They seem to tell him:

"If men like to get butchered it is their business, but I prefer to stay here peacefully to browse in the grass." As you see, as horses they are non-political. They receive beatings from whites, yellows or reds. Therefore where there is grass without beatings, that is their

preferred political regime.

We were convinced of this, because although we chased a horse for an hour, we didn't succeed in convincing him to let himself get caught. Nothing! He would stop to listen to all our arguments, moving his head, we not knowing if he was approving or disapproving them, but after when we would sweetly tell him: "Dear... come here. We want to take you to a beautiful stable where there is plenty of good hay... a horse's paradise..." Instead of letting us take him prisoner he would run away. Ah! the ingratitude of horses!

And so with empty hands we came in the vicinity of the front and it was there that with pride Fracassi, as a consolation, showed me a good number of horses he had succeeded in charming, or fooling, with his siren-song. Horses surely dumber than the smart horses we had pursued in vain. To me they seemed more dead than alive.

"And it is with these skeletons that you are going to defeat fascism?" I asked Fracassi, terrorized. "Come back in 15 days and you will see what a miraculous transformation has happened to them. Even the grandfathers, under my guard, will acquire the vigor of youth!"

And as I know the miracles of faith, I wouldn't be surprised if such marvel would really happen.

I go searching for other Italian comrades, and I encounter them in Vicién. They are comrade Bifolchi, today Colonel in the Ascaso division, and whom I have known for a long time, and Marzocchi, his aide-de-camp. There are also other comrades, of the few who have remained in the division, the majority of them having returned to Barcelona a few days before, disgusted by the forced inactivity in which they had to remain for many months... they who had come to fight, not to rest. Even Bifolchi and Marzocchi tomorrow would go to Barcelona, undecided about what they will do in the future. But probably they will return here.

The following day, after sleeping in half of Bifolchi's bed, I get ready to go to the trenches. But these are still ten kilometers away, in front of Huesca. Therefore I go first to the Malatesta Castle in

company of commandant Otto, who is active in one of these sectors. But as we have to wait two hours because Otto is busy, I go to get some sun in the field nearby. When I come back Otto has departed with the correspondent of the *Nuevo Aragón*. The girl being in a hurry to return to Barbastro, Otto saying that he would come back to pick me up. But I get impatient by the long wait (even if we are in Spain, and in questions of time it is customary to take it easy). So Bifolchi puts his car at my disposal with the chauffeur, and we go looking for Otto and the correspondent, as we are informed that they have gone to the cemetery, which dominates Huesca. We meet them when they were already returning, and after some conversation, they depart, and I remain, even the chauffeur having to return to Bifolchi.

The cemetery does honor to its name. It is really a peaceful place. The nearest place to the enemy is about a thousand yards away. This seems enormous to me, having passed through the trenches of Madrid where there are only a few steps between enemies.

Many niches in the cemetery, besides serving the dead, also serve the militia men to sleep, protected from inclement weather; and the comrade who came with me, having been on the look out all night, is falling with sleep, and so he slides into one of the empty niches to sleep. And we say goodby. I hear some shooting, and following one trench I go in that direction to see what is happening. There is no fighting. Instead the militia men are outside the trench to enjoy the sun in a safe place. After walking some distance without meeting anybody inside the trench I arrive at a place where I see a stretch of trench a little up a hill. To me it seems the continuation of the same trench I was walking, and not wanting to disturb the tranquility of the militia men, I get out on the open in order to reach it. I thinking that in that place there was no danger. But I made a mistake, and almost it cost me my life.

As soon as I was out in the open a bullet grazed my suit. I threw myself backward inside the trench just in time to escape a volley of bullets from a machine gun. It was the enemy who was shooting at me, who probably surprised themselves, had hesitated a

on the aragón front

moment before shooting. In going back to the militia men I asked them how was it that they were leaving a trench deserted, and just a few steps from the enemy?

“What? Up there during the day there is always a comrade watching and at night.”

“But there was nobody when I went out, and the fascists started shooting.”

“Ah! then you can call yourself lucky, because if I had seen you myself and I was not here taking the sun I would have shot at you also with the machine gun, thinking that you were an enemy.”

“Therefore it is the sun that I have to thank for my life?”

“The other day a soldier came who had run away from the fascists and they shot at him. We covered him with our fire and he saved himself with just some fear. Do you hear those shots that rarely stop? This new comrade told us that who shoots is a very mean guy with a wooden leg. He hates us to death! Two nights ago we spoke with the fascist soldiers. We agreed to exchange papers. So many *Solidaridad Obrera* for the same number of *Herald de Aragón*, which is their paper. At 9 o’clock in the morning three of our comrades and three of them got out in the open in order to meet half way. But the officer with the wooden leg in realizing what was going on started shooting, and a bullet crossed the lung of our comrade. He is very gravely injured in the hospital. Afterwards we heard the laughing of the fascist officer. When the occasion offers itself we’ll go over and we’ll blow up that assassin with dynamite!” It must have been he who had shot at me.

“Be generous,” I told them. “When you go, stick a cartridge under him for me also. It is the minimum that I ask you to do to this malefactor!”

FOR LA MANCHA AND THE SOUTH

I leave from Madrid for Pozoblanco in a truck of the UGT, which had brought oil to our supply warehouse. The truck is full of

empty containers, and we have to squeeze ourselves among them as best we can. Going with us are some *milicianos* from the front of Madrid who have a few days of leave. They are boys, in great part communists, cheerful and of good heart, who don't resemble at all their criminal leaders. They also believe that they are making the revolution. They are farmers, and they have not yet been spoiled by authority. It is clear. During the whole trip they sing revolutionary songs, and I take advantage of the good opportunity to sing with them. It is a long time since I have sung our songs with pleasure. I have to go back twenty years in order to find the period in which our songs were heard in the capitals of Europe.

They were the songs of the rebels in many languages, all of us youths who didn't want to bend under the avalanche of the phony patriotism which had passed over Europe in war, which has pushed us beyond the borders of our countries, on our way to exile. While the people were cutting each other's throats insanely for the profit of the capitalists, we were the only ones who were shouting to the sacrificed people our voices of rebellion and hope.

And four years had to pass, in which the youth of Europe was sacrificed on the altar of the God of gold, before our voices were understood by the masses, and translated into action. Then followed the revolutionary period of the post-war, a period that had to fail for the cowardice of many who called themselves friends of the people, to be followed by the fascist reaction, which crushed every rebellious voice. And a silence of death covered our countries, and this silence still lasts. And so today I sing also, for all those years of silence. I sing the song of revolutionary memories. I sing the song of my youth, when we believed the revolution would soon triumph on the other side of the Mediterranean: the song of a people who thought they were near liberation, and instead fell into one of the greatest despotisms.

In making a grand tour we arrive at Aranjuez. We proceed, and soon we arrive, at last, at Madridejos. We are hungry, and here we

stop. We enter into a *fonda*, and we are told that we can eat eggs and some other things. The information is pleasing, but bad news is added to it. There are also other things to eat, we are hungry, but we can't eat them. The mayor of the village has given the order not to give anything to eat to a *transitante*, a passer-by. With our hunger this makes us furious, especially the driver, who besides hunger, was also exhausted from driving on the bad road. There is a kind of revolt. Like arrows we go out, the eleven that we are, in search of the mayor. After half an hour we find him in the movie theater, surrounded by half a dozen guards protecting him, and he repeats that we can't eat.

“Ah! we don't eat?... *Me cago en* the virgin of... We don't eat?” repeats the Andaluz. “And we who come from Madrid without eating in order not to take away the bread from them, and now we arrive here, there is food, and we can't eat?...”

“Listen,” we ask the mayor in unison, “have you eaten?” The mayor has to admit that he did.

“While we bring food to Madrid, you amuse yourself in the movie surrounded by half a dozen do-nothings who should be better at the front.”

“Like us,” repeats another.

“Let's have something to eat, otherwise...”

The dispute gets hot and we arrive to reciprocal menaces. A conflict is imminent. At last the mayor bends. We can eat. But before going, the Andaluz tells him that the revolution is not made in the movie.

“Can you imagine a similar scoundrel?” are the comments while we eat.

“He with a full belly at the movie, while we are swallowing dust on the road, and mud in the trenches.”

All pronounce threats against the shirkers of the revolution, and the militiamen threaten to come back from the front and clean up all those who make profit from the war. The neighbors inform us that the mayor is a shameless person who makes business over everything.

And tell us that the mayor gets 3,000 *pesetas* of salary annually, and besides 8 *pesetas* daily as president of the Agricultural Committee. And more, he owns trucks for mail service from Madridejos to Alcázar, and other businesses. A real speculator. We ask them why they don't throw him out of that position.

"If we only could! But the situation is this. The village has always been reactionary. The right got 900 votes, and the left 90 in the last elections. The other parties and organizations have these proportions: the socialists, 1,500 members; the Communist Party, 200; and the CNT, 100. And it is comprehensible that in a village where the anarchist influence is so minimal, the speculators prosper."

In the provinces of Toledo and La Mancha, socialism and communism are strong. That is the reason that the collectivization of property is not pushed; Anarchism begins to progress in other parts of Andalucía, where anarchism is winning the right of... citizenship in spite of the opposition of the political parties.

In entering La Mancha, I admire the fertility of the land. The Knight of the Sad Countenance was passing through these places correcting injustices in an individual and impossible struggle. The injustices remained and the poor Knight died without seeing his fantastic dream realized. Today other knights go all over the land of Spain correcting a collective and bloody struggle: the social injustices, and will not depose their arms, nor their dreams until the final triumph.

At one o'clock at night we arrive at Santa Cruz de la Mudela, where I shall have to take the train to Andújar, after sleeping a few hours. At 7 o'clock in the morning I am already at the railroad station waiting for the 7:45 train. It will arrive three hours late, but it doesn't matter. This is the way things go in this country. Slowly, slowly, but at the end things arrive. And in Italy where the trains... run on time, where did they arrive?... To Mussolini. Fine conquest! But here there is one thing which people are in a hurry to do: make the revolution. And the fascist

for la mancha and the south

hordes are here to strangle it while here, all, or almost all... are always ready to make it. It is a great consolation for people in a hurry...

The train is full of militiamen of Andalucía, who also come from the Madrid front with permission. And where there is an Andaluz there are always jokes and songs. There is Pedro, real son of the land of María Santísima, as it was in other times. For an hour I have been listening to his flamenco songs, followed with some dance in the limited space of the wagon.

Y ha dicho la C.N.T.

Y ha dicho la C.N.T.

No pasarán!

And his voice continues to modulate for quite a while the “*No pasarán!*”

In the other wagon there is Anastasio, a gitano type. He also sings, giving competition to the *coloratura* sopranos, with a variety of the most strange sounds. And his mouth twists, but always melodiously, although he has never heard a soprano. And he continues with his warblings, his *gorgeggi*, while his eyes makes expressions of an aroused lover. He puts his whole heart with his words. But there is also the revolutionary song:

Long live the proletarians

Long live the proletarians

And death to the bourgeoisie.

Simple song of a dreaming youngster. It explains to me something of my infancy. Like many *gitanos*, in his family, naturally, there were many children. Always hungry. In order to keep together soul and body, the children had to beg for charity. Nobody knew how to read in his family, and he has learned to read while fighting these eight months, in the trenches between one shooting and the other. And his mom is more proud of this prodigy than of his actions at the front. He pulls out a number of *Castilla Libre*, the anarchist daily and reads a piece, slowly, stumbling at steps, heroic. He is twenty-eight years old and for the first time his consciousness is awakening, as he understands the value

of social issues. At the beginning he and his four brothers enlisted in the ranks of the Revolution for their hatred of the impertinence and hypocrisy of the rich and the priests.

“The rich? What sons of a *mala madre*! When I was asking them for a *perilla* because I was starving, they used to answer me: ‘*Que Dios te perdone!*’”

“And wasn’t it sufficient? Ah! Ah!”

“And what had God to forgive me?” This was the idea that he could not understand. Today already he understands that God, if there is one, goes arm in arm with priests and monks and rich assassins. Today he neither fears God, nor the rich. They will all fall by his guns and those of his comrades.

Long live the proletarians

Long live the proletarians

And death to the bourgeoisie and the priests.

We arrive at Andújar, the end of the train. Here I stop to visit the front at Pozoblanco, of which I shall speak in another correspondence. Then I continue in a bus for Jaén. It is about sixty-five kilometers away and I can admire fields with a variety of cultivation. They are the richest lands of Spain. Olive groves everywhere, besides many other products. It is a garden climate which makes one feel like stretching out on the beautiful grass, lazily.

I arrive in Jaén at a moment of mourning. Before I came, the enemy planes arrived here and they made a massacre. At my arrival they had already counted 138 dead, and thousands of wounded, mainly women and children, who were those in the town. But why get indignant? After what they have done to Madrid, we already know the criminality of the fascists. They destroy and massacre indiscriminately, as long as they can terrorize the population, even without military objectives. For this they are such good Christians, and they have all the blessing of that other great hypocrite who pulls the strings in the Vatican. The massacres of innocents will only end when

we shall finish with them.

I wanted to stop in Jaén to go to the front of Porcuna before continuing, but as over there all is peaceful, I join the company of some delegates from Martos who are going to a special meeting of the CNT of Andalucía in Baza. So I go with them in the direction of Almería and on the road of Guadix we stop in Huelma to visit a collective of eight hundred people. They produce from 9,000 to 10,000 *arrobas* (25 pounds) of olives, cattle, cereals, etc. The value of their production is valued at 600,000 *pesetas* annually, which assures the community a rich and happy livelihood. They have introduced the family salary, which is as follows: Men: 3.00 *pesetas* daily; women: 0.75; minors: 0.25; grown-up children who work: 1.00. When the son becomes independent from the family he receives the same salary as the men. We visit the warehouse where they keep the products and we are enthusiastic about the order that exists in every activity. I give them my congratulations for the good example that they are giving to all the villages of the region (which still keep the prejudices and the egoism of the bourgeois) of how the anarchists know how to organize things and live a life free of masters.

The lands that they possess were, mostly, expropriated from the great owners, others were voluntarily given by the small owners, who prefer to work together. When they put expropriation into practice, they invited the UGT to take part, but this organization didn't have the courage to do so. Then our comrades continued alone. And so they built a community which is prosperous, and admired by all. One of the delegates, shows me the lands that they possess while we go speedily toward Guadix. They are the best cultivated lands in all the villages. And it pleases me to hear these poorest of the poor say: "This land now is ours, and also that one." Before they were feeling like slaves, while now they feel like human beings. Free men and women. At the thirteenth kilometer the comrade tells me:

"When we were slaves for two *pesetas* daily we had to walk in the morning thirteen kilometers each day (something like eighteen

miles). You can imagine the hunger that we and our families were suffering. Hunger and prayers, there you have what our masters were generously giving us as good Christians. Then it is no surprise that one day we had to clean off the parasites."

I leave them in Guadix, and continue to Almería by train. In the offices of the FAI they tell me the time that the train departs; I go to the station, but we have to wait five hours. The supply of coal is short and the machines old. Many people are waiting, and they will take up the five hours telling jokes about priests, monks, and nuns, a curse that was dominating everywhere on this part of the country. And now the people take vengeance with salacious tales. The women are the most irreverent.

Among this crowd there are families of displaced people. On seeing me taking notes two boys come near me. I explain to them what I am doing. They are Antonio and Cuadrado, of Pedro Abad, a village won and lost three times. Today it is in the hands of the fascists. I have to promise them that I will put their names in the paper. The story that they tell me of their village is horrifying enough to make your hair stand up on end, which is the story of all the villages that fell into fascist hands. And in their village this happened three times, and each time that the fascists reconquered it they performed a massacre, so that not a single peasant or worker remained, except those who succeeded in escaping. In a small village fifty workers were killed in front of their wives and children and mothers, and a number of women had hair cut, and others raped. Some workers were burned alive with gasoline. Horror and murders everywhere where fascism passes.

"And what we should do to the fascists?" I ask the children.

"They have to be hanged!" answers Antonio, twelve years old.

"No," says the smaller boy. "We have to cut their throats!"

And on their children's faces and in their beautiful eyes, flashes a look of hatred.

CATASTROPHIC REVOLUTIONARISM

Bilbao has fallen. The heroism of a people has been defeated by the superiority of weapons of the fascist hordes. With Bilbao in their hands, the probability of a final victory now is on their side. Let no one have illusions. The Spanish Revolution is in its most critical hour. In spite of the enthusiasm and the faith of our fighters, the brute force of arms is winning over us. It is in the light of the tragedy of Bilbao that we shall judge those who shout, shout continuously that before any consideration of the war comes the revolution at one hundred per cent. Therefore it is necessary to refresh their minds a littl by showing them the catastrophe of Bilbao, which opened the way to the total fascist conquest of Spain.

Yes, Pierre Besnard would be right if we could put the revolution before the war but it is the war that places itself before the revolution. Whether we want it or not, we have the war in front of us, and we have to end it, otherwise every revolutionary conquest would be lost. We can suspend the struggle against the interior capitalism temporarily, but we cannot cease the struggle against fascism, not even for a second.

The revolution is determined by our will, the war is forced on us. And we can't complete the revolution if first we don't win against fascism in four nations: Spain, Italy, Germany, and Portugal. And besides beat the counter-revolution embodied in the anti-anarchist coalition of all the bourgeois parties. To forget this is to overestimate our forces.

We are strong, yes, but not sufficiently to win against all these fascist enemies, as well as against our false anti-fascist "friends". Whether we want it or not, we are forced to remain joined with this collection of anti-anarchist "friends" in the struggle against fascism in spite of the danger of being cowardly stabbed by them in the heart of the revolution itself.

This is the danger that always exists when in order to fight a powerful enemy we must associate ourselves with elements of other

parties. In order to save ourselves from death in front, we risk being stabbed in the back. It is the situation on which anarchism finds itself in Spain. We are walking over two precipices. If we want to save ourselves from fascist catastrophe we risk perishing in the tragedy of the counter-revolution. It is a tragic situation in all its extensions in which we are forced to go arm in arm with the counter-revolution, that calls itself “anti-fascist” in order to fight fascism, too strong to be fought ourselves, alone, while in the counter-revolution which calls itself anti-fascist there are many elements which would feel more comfortable on the other side of the barricade. It is a situation full of anguish which causes a paralyzing effect on our forces.

The comrades of foreign countries cannot understand the terrible dilemma in which we find ourselves in Spain, if firstly they don't understand that alone we don't have sufficient energy or strength to destroy the bourgeois counter-revolution, as the communist counter-revolution is also associated with it, the communists being the betrayers of the revolutionary aspirations of the Spanish working people. And it is just a dream to think that, besides combating the counter-revolution, we would also be capable of crushing fascism.

Voline, in *Tierra Libre*, says that from the moment that in the ranks of the CNT-FAI there are elements that are opposed to the “line” of compromise with the other parties followed until now, it is to be supposed that this “line” is wrong. But the opposition could be wrong. The fact is that the “line” of compromise which keeps a semblance of antifascist unity has created from nothing a military force which is containing the powerful fascist army, while a struggle among the so-called antifascist forces would have paralized this struggle.

If the CNT-FAI have followed a line of compromise, it is not because they like it, but because they are compelled to do so. With great pleasure they would have gone to the extreme of the revolution—like the opposition—the majority of the comrades who accept the compromise knowing quite well that the revolution is menaced by the counter-revolution among us who would like to crush it. But

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unfortunately now, to crush the counter-revolution would be a weakening of the antifascist front, and they consider fascism the immediate danger. Without destroying this there will be no revolution, neither one hundred per cent, nor one per cent. With the triumph of fascism would come the total extermination of anarchism, and the working masses would be entirely enslaved. Is it possible, at the moment, to take such an extreme risk in the fight against the counter-revolution, in view of such terrifying danger to the future of the proletariat?

“If the counter-revolution has fortified itself so much it is because the anarchists have made too many concessions,” say those who oppose all compromise. On this, the opposition in foreign countries, as well as the opposition in Spain itself, forget the reality of the anti-fascist struggle. The CNT-FAI have been forced to swallow the bitter pill of permitting the strengthening of the counter-revolution because the revolution needed arms: guns, cannons, machine guns, tanks, and planes in order to triumph over fascism. The revolution engendered a great surge of enthusiasm, great courage, but didn’t possess offensive instruments to support that courage, that faith, that enthusiasm; and although these psychological and idealistic elements are powerful weapons in a struggle, by themselves they are not enough. In view of the danger of death, a coward and also a fascist enemy can defend himself and attack with the same energy as any anarchist who fights for a cause, as a modern war is no more a struggle of actual body against body.

The revolution possessed the psychological element abundantly, but it was absolutely lacking the physical elements to defeat the fascist army. By the month of April the army of Franco probably counted 400,000 soldiers equipped with the best arms that a modern army can have. Thousands of machine guns, artillery of all kind in great amount, numerous tanks and hundreds of bombarding planes, and others sent from Germany and Italy, besides 150,000 soldier-mercenaries of the regular armies. While the few weapons that had been received from Russia—compared to those of the fascists—many were old and used. For example, in our counter-offensive in Guada-

lajara I personally witnessed an explosion of a 75 piece of artillery of French make that France had sent to Russia at the time of the first World War—information that in my article “From the Guadalajara Front” I could not give in order not to inform the fascists of the quality of some of our armament. (The explosion killed one of the artillery men, and another was severely wounded.)

Therefore, to the comrades from abroad who continuously ask the Spanish comrades to get themselves killed on the front, we, a little less brutally, want to ask them:

“And what have you done, you the revolutionaries from abroad, to halt the fascists who are strangling the Spanish Revolution? Collect money, shout protestations, write violent articles?... Excuse our impertinence, but fascism can’t be stopped with indignant protests. It is beyond any moral decency and human sensitivity. Your duty, the duty of the world’s revolutionaries, is to stop this fascist invasion. Your duty in this moment, the duty of the international proletariat is to stop your governments from blockading our coasts and borders while they allow the fascist invasion. Your duty in this moment would be to stop your governments from maintaining the arms control that is strangling us. But to do this, it is necessary to use revolutionary action, violent struggle in the streets; but you are in no condition to do it, because like us you are surrounded by fascists and counterrevolutionary forces, and you are too weak to carry this action.”

Against the 400,000 fascist soldiers it would be necessary to have equal number of fighters. How to arm this formidable army? Our factories can still produce a limited number of arms and even if there were the means, which we don’t have—a war industry can’t be improvised. Yes, weapons were received from many lands, but not sufficiently, and not the best. I who have been in trenches on all fronts have seen rifles of all models and of every epoch. Except for the few privileged brigades, in the same company you can find the most antiquated models, which after shooting a few times you have to take apart and see... what is the matter. And to find ammunition for each

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model is a Herculean task. The confusion that was created among the combatants was awful. What power can such an army have, placed in front of the formidable weapons of fascism? Our combatants are forced to make up for inferiority of their arms with the sacrifice of their lives. It is necessary to find better weapons and greater quantity. Perhaps Russia, in agreement with France and England had offered them (which I doubt that they had enough in quantity) but the offer was not disinterested one. First they took all the gold that the government possessed, then among the other conditions submitted was that they would not hinder communism in Spain.

And these conditions have to be tolerated or we perish in the jaws of fascism. The anarchists of the CNT-FAI chose between Bolshevism and fascism in the thought of which is the lesser evil: Bolshevism, because they thought that afterward they could stop this danger more easily. Because the revolution had to choose between sure death and probable death.

And in this tragic dilemma we find ourselves at this hour. Who can think of creating a conflict in the rear-guard? It would be suicide!

The counterrevolution may fear more from the triumph of the anarchist social revolution, than the triumph of fascism; but we have to destroy fascism totally in order to have the possibility of a triumphant social revolution.

With tears in our eyes and rage in our hearts for the moment we are forced to tolerate the counter-revolution. Until, unable to bear their provocations any longer, we blow up... Then a catastrophe will come at the hand of fascism. It is what the counter-revolution desires, perhaps.

Spanish anarchism has two pincers at its throat: fascism and the communist and bourgeois counter-revolution.

What will the revolutionaries of the world do to save us, and save the revolution?

ON THE ANDALUZ FRONT

I arrived in Andújar at one o'clock in the afternoon. After getting local permission to visit these fronts I begin to look for the means to go to the front of Pozoblanco, which at this moment is at about a hundred kilometers from Andújar. As there is no train in this direction, I go on the road and raise my hand when I see a vehicle coming in order to obtain transportation. If there is room, nobody refuses a corner to a proletarian war correspondent, particularly one dressed like a militiaman.

It rains and it is already four o'clock in the afternoon. I imagine that for today I shall have to abandon the idea of arriving at the firing line, and I feel a little disappointed. But a vehicle arrives that says: General Staff. Good. I introduce myself. In the car there are only three persons and I leave with them. The comrade at my side presents the comrade who is in front.

Tovarish X, colonel, a very important personage. Informed that I come from Madrid and that I have been on the Guadalajara front during the defeat of Mussolini's army, I had to give them a detailed report of our victory which is what I have already done a dozen times, and which I repeat, naturally, with great joy. Two divisions we defeated on that front... and I fear that by the end of my tale my enthusiasm has also defeated all the rest of the divisions of the enemy.

Beyond the Sierra Morena

For the first 25 kilometers of our trip we have to cross the famous Sierra Morena. It is a marvelous and savage landscape. In other times I would have sat on some summit and contemplated a long time the marvelous spectacle. But today I am pulled to other places awaiting me that may also be savage and beautiful, but where peace has been destroyed. It doesn't matter. There where the destiny of a new world is played, there go I. Later on we shall have eyes for landscape; today we have only a heart for our war. A hurried look, and forward!

In Heroism Villanueva del Duque was Equal to Pozoblanco

We pass Aldea del Cerezo, Villanueva de Córdoba and we arrive in Pozoblanco, a name already made famous for its heroic struggle against Franco's mercenaries. Pozoblanco, in the heart of the people is taking the place of a little Madrid. And yet, Villanueva del Duque a few kilometers from here, in spite of being rarely mentioned in the war bulletins, has endured a no less heroic struggle than Pozoblanco. The fighting in Villanueva del Duque lasted eight days and nights, and our military had to stand the furious attacks of the enemy in the mud up to their knees without retreating one inch, and counterattacking with the same fury. And finally they advanced and occupied Villanueva del Duque, which was in fascist hands, contributing in that way to the capture of Alcaracejos jointly with our forces coming from Pozoblanco.

Once beyond the village of Pozoblanco my traveling companions showed me the grounds of the struggle, while we continue on to Alcaracejos. The numerous holes in the ground show the great use of artillery that was brought into the fight on both sides. At about four kilometers from the village they showed me the trench which was the highest point of the enemy's advance. And from this trench the enemy was pushed back 23 kilometers, which now is the actual front.

A Fourteen-Year-Old Guerrillero

We pass Alcaracejos and we look for the commander of Battalion 25. Lino tells us that he is at the avant-post. We go searching for him. At one kilometer from the front we leave the car in order not to attract the enemy's fire with the noise of our motor. It is getting dark and it becomes difficult to find the place where the commander is. A fighter we meet on the road offers to guide us. This... impressive fighter is... fourteen years old. From his looks he seems to be twelve. He is small but full of spirit.

“You are not going to tell me that you are strong enough to hold a gun,” I ask him. Full of regrets, he answers:

“The commander didn’t want to give me one, but I carry the ammunitions to the trenches.”

“And the shooting... and the bullets... what?”

“I don’t think of these. I’m used to them. Two months ago I ran away from home in order to come here to enlist in the militia. And here I am!”

“And I see you. Very... frightening!” I laugh.

“And you, what do you think of that son of a bitch Mussolini?” he asks me. “Here he thought that he was going to find Abyssinians. Wait until we finish here, then we go to Italy to do the same thing.”

Bellicose intentions that we like to hear from such... a formidable combatant. When we reach the commander the little comrade returns to his revolutionary work.

“I have a lot to do,” he says. And he goes running.

Fire on the Summit

The fire on the summit in front of us is intense. Guns against guns. The artillery is silent. Already it is dark and faces can hardly be seen. Introduced to the military, they speak of the operations of the day. We didn’t advance much, but we have taken some positions on the summits. And the commander points to those we occupy, and those that the enemy occupies.

After the enemy had retreated from Pozoblanco, from a lightly undulated ground, now it has entrenched itself on these elevations, which constitute more strategic positions, because they dominate the terrain for many miles around—all terrain that we had to cross in reaching here under the enemy fire from many sides. We have succeeded also in occupying some summits, but lower, and it is from those that we are trying to advance more easily in descent to Peñarroya and Bélmez, which are very important places, and menace Córdoba.

The commander is called to the camp phone installed under

fire on the summit

the trees.

“We have occupied another eight,” he tells us. And with his finger, he points to a height at the right side, of the road. We go down 200 yards, and the commanders retire to a vehicle to discuss their tactics. I remain with a medical lieutenant. A stretcher with a wounded man arrives.

“Where is he wounded?” I ask the lieutenant, who seems depressed. “He is dead,” he answers. I touch his hand and it isn’t yet cold. Perhaps he isn’t dead yet?” “No, his pulse has stopped. The bullet has crossed his breast and he has died on the way from the trench to the ambulance.” “Who is he?” “We are looking for his papers... we found some photographs, and a letter.” In the closed ambulance, in order that the light not be seen, we read. He has six children of various ages, but still young. Here they are, all smiling. Poor children! A few minutes ago your father perhaps had his last thoughts for you, and perhaps he had thought:

“Goodby, children! Continue to fight for the cause for which I die!”

We lay the dead man in the ambulance near the wounded. The ambulance departs. Left alone, I seek a place to sleep. Groping in the darkness, I find a group of soldiers lying on the ground. What shall I do? At this hour it is already cold, and I have no blanket to cover myself. I throw myself near a soldier on the wet grass. The shooting continues, but it seems that we are protected, because the whistling of the bullets is heard over our heads. Therefore we can sleep peacefully.

Lying on the ground, I look up to the starry sky. Up there can be seen all the known constellations, but it is impossible to discover the polar star, the point that serves as a guide to navigators. It doesn’t matter. The revolution will follow its straight course. We will serve as a compass, and the human boat will arrive at its destiny. The comrade near me sleeps placidly.

Perhaps Adversaries in Ideas,

but Comrades Face the Common Enemy

I awake after a few hours, trembling from the cold. Pieces of ice hit my face. It is hail. I press near my neighbor wrapped also in his blanket. I lift a corner of it in order to cover at least my frozen feet. The cold that penetrates under the cover wakes him up.

“Eh! and who are you? To which company do you belong?”

“To all and to none in particular. I go to the fronts in search of information.”

“And you don’t have a blanket?”

“None!”

“Why didn’t you tell me before? I am of the ‘Stalin’ battalion of Valencia. Get under the blanket.”

That I do, although Stalin and I are mortal enemies, because you submit yourself blindly to your leaders, and I am in revolt against all forms of slavery. But here both of us are in front of the common enemy, and under this blanket we are brothers. We have no time for ideological discussions because some of these bullets can hit us both. The time will come that the people will have to decide between your doctrine and mine. Dictatorship or liberty are the two roads. Now we have to fight together or we shall be lost!

I wake up. It is dawn. The sky has cleared up. It will be a sunny day and this overjoys me, because the day of sun is the day of combat. Our war has still a long way to go, and a day of rest is a lost day, they say in the trenches. So much is the desire to end it soon with the enemy...

I get up. I would like to say “*salud!*” to my companion for the night, but he is still sleeping. I don’t want to waken him, and also I can’t see his face which is covered with the blanket.

“Then, *salud!* unknown Bolshevik! An anarchist thanks you for your gesture of solidarity in this cold night. Tomorrow, perhaps, when fascism shall have been destroyed, our ideologies will collide. But this night we have been brothers. Let’s not forget this if a day will

perhaps adversaries in ideas, but comrades face the common enemy

come when we will be enemies. Let the clash among us be of ideas and not of steel!"

I go on my way to another sector of the front, always coasting the hills occupied by the enemy. A car comes by, and the driver, seeing me walking slows down.

"Where are you going, comrade?" he asks me.

"To where the fighting is now intense."

"Come in, I am going there myself. I have orders from the command."

The road we follow doesn't seem to represent a great danger. The shooting goes on all around, but it seems rather to be an echo. In front of us I see the outline of a small bridge and the car makes a jump forward and goes at full speed.

"Hold on very tight, because we are under fire until we have passed that small bridge," the driver shouts. And the road being full of holes, we are rather going from one jump to the other. And we hear three explosions, one after the other. We are under the aim of the artillery, and they are shooting at us, and one of the explosions makes another hole where we have just passed. We succeed in crossing the bridge.

"Hold on, hold on, soon we'll be out of danger," he shouts. But more shots come, and this time, instead of hitting the road behind us, they hit in front of us, and to avoid them the driver swerves suddenly, and the car goes down the road on the opposite side from where the shots come, heading to hit a tree. We jump out from the car which is now useless, after the driver has tried uselessly to start the motor.

"Beh!" he says, philosophically. "Better it than us. I'll try to reach the command on foot." And he starts running. "Goodby, stranger!" and he disappears among the trees in a small wood nearby. The fascists, perhaps thinking that we are dead, stop firing, as they can't see us anymore, the high road protecting us from their sight. I continue on foot.

At a distance I see a small house. I go forwards to it. It seems intact, therefore I imagine that it is not in danger. I walk towards the entrance door. A militiaman from behind it seeing that I am walking toward it, shouts to me:

“Eh! where are you going? Do you want to get killed? Pass to the other side. Crouch down!”

“Ah! I thought that there was no danger!”

“Only because they think that the house is unoccupied and abandoned. But we come inside to cook our meals without being noticed, and sometimes also to sleep when everything is quiet.”

We enter the house through the rear window. Inside there are half a dozen militiamen. They get ready to sit at the table. After being introduced they invite me to sit at the table.

“You know, we were on watch all night, and this is our dinner before going to sleep... if they allow us.”

And I had forgotten that I haven’t eaten since yesterday in Andújar.

The pieces of a small animal that is in the stew could be a hare, a rabbit, or a cat. I didn’t care to ask them which. It was good... my hunger said. Once more I had to tell them the story of Guadalajara. The dinner didn’t take long to disappear, and I was ready to go, after wishing them good night and sweet dreams... But I didn’t have the time. The fascists must have been in bad humor. We heard the first burst of artillery, followed by two more that made the house tremble. Without showing ourselves, we watched from the window, and as the explosions happened nearby, the dirt was released.

“Ah!” said one. “They must have seen the smoke or got suspicious. I bet that they want to demolish our beautiful house.”

And, in fact, another shot came that took away the corner of the house, and a second exploded right outside.

“All outside!” shouted the one who seemed in command. And he jumped out of the window in the back. The others, like lightning, followed him, and I was last, not being used to commands.

perhaps adversaries in ideas, but comrades face the common enemy

There was an enormous stone not far away, and we rushed to it, flattening ourselves behind as a protection, some projectiles passing over our heads and going to explode a little farther down, others hitting the house, sending everything in the air.

“Goodby, beautiful house!” shouted one with regret.

They tell me that the front is now stabilized, our people down below, and the enemy up in the hills. Obviously our efforts had reached the maximum of their force. Trenches were being dug. My companions decided to sleep behind the rock as the safest place. The bombardment has ceased, the house half demolished. They showed me a road not far away which was safer than the way I came, and I decided to continue. It was time to go back to Andújar in order to visit other fronts of the South. By now here the firing diminished to practically nothing. Both sides shot just to let one another know that they are present and vigilant.

After I walked a while, a car passed by with two officers. They slowed down and asked me:

“Where are you going?”

“To Andújar.”

“Get in. We’ll put you on the right road. Who are you?”

“A war correspondent.” And I show them my magic permit to visit all fronts by Miaca. It is my pass for everywhere, as everybody knows who he is. We stop at what seems the general headquarters of the front. We enter a big tent in a safe place. (Generals don’t take chances.) There are various personages sitting around a table. It must be the command. One of them is rather fat. He is Tovarish so-and-so, and he must be the commander of the front, because he is the one who seems to give orders. The two officers enter who have brought me to the front, and one of them explains in their language who I am. I only understanding the word Guadalajara, the commandant showing approval with his head. And I fear that I may have to repeat once again the story of that battle; luckily, various messengers enter running, and

everybody gets busy with the news they bring. And I take advantage of this to slip out of the tent and disappear on the road to Andújar.

In Front of the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Head

Before arriving in Andújar I had also wanted to see this position, where a group of fascists have fortified themselves in an old monastery on a hill in the middle of the Sierra. It is about twenty-two kilometers from Andújar. With the provisions truck, I arrive at the command. The commander is a youth full of spirit. He offers himself to take me with his car to the positions. But first he offers me a glass of wine which I, staunchly anti-alcohol, have to force down in order not to offend his hospitality.

We pass through enchanting country, and soon we see the old convent built on the most dominant place, from which one can see at least ten kilometers all around. We leave the vehicle, and we climb to our positions. And I realize that the position the fascists occupy is impregnable. Those monks knew how to protect themselves. But they are completely surrounded, and to be able to survive, Queipo de Llano has to send them provisions by parachutes dropped from air planes, which sometimes the wind carries to our positions, providing a nice dinner for our fighters.

Inside the convent there are about two hundred Civil Guards and about a thousand non-combatants, among them many women and children. Which is what holds back our people from bombarding them. All this sierra had served the King and the nobles as hunting grounds. Nobody could enter if they were not of the “*casa*.” This territory is a real garden. From a militiaman I took a gun... to shoot birds.

“With this the rich went hunting?” I ask him.

“Yes, and with it now I hunt the rich.”

“Then good hunting. *Salud!*”

THE INCURABLE ANARCHIST FAITH AMONG CREATORS

If a reproach could be made to the Spanish comrades, it is that of having behaved themselves at the beginning of the revolution too much like anarchists. This means to have taken their principles too much to the letter and not imposing anarchism, at least in Cataluña, where they had the strength to do it, therefore in this way to let escape the opportunity, perhaps unique, of realizing our ideal in a greater measure. And why did the Spanish anarchists do this? To convince our adversaries and enemies of the goodness of our doctrine, our generosity, our maximum tolerance of the opinions of others and of our spirit of sacrifice, honesty, and austerity, and by further conceding to all the unrestricted liberty of political proselytism, including to the most murderous enemies of anarchism, which would seem unforgivable infantilism.

This form of conduct can keep us strictly on anarchist principles, but in a revolutionary period this tolerance and generosity to the maximum degree for our enemies in many cases can render a bad service to our ideal. The result is that the imposition that we don't want to impose on others, they impose on us, by taking advantage of our extreme tolerance to become strong, then using their strength against us. It is what is happening now, particularly in Cataluña, where our infinite and foolish tolerance has permitted communists and republicans to form and reconstruct their formations, and use these forces to disorganize our forces, then arrest, persecute, and even assassinate our comrades, which is what is going on right now.

The extreme tolerance toward other sectors in revolutionary periods would seem not just silly but suicidal. And whoever wants to apply strictly the anarchist principles of non-imposition in the period of a revolution is thus preparing their own grave. It has been the fundamental error of the Spanish comrades in these months of struggle. An error which is being paid now with persecutions and murders of

our members at the hands of communists, socialists and republicans coalesced against us in order to destroy us. With less tolerance, less honesty, less generosity, and less respect for liberty of proselytism allowed to our adversaries when we had the means, we today, perhaps, would be accused of an infraction of our principles, but the anarchist movement would still find itself in a position of domination in this region. In what concerns power in the revolution, we would dare to say, that the principles of anarchism have betrayed anarchy.

As You Treat Me, I Treat You

We know that in stating this we incur the sin of heresy. But we think that in certain circumstances it would be preferable for anarchism to incur the sin of heresy, than to cry over its own corpse. (Or let's renounce being revolutionists, as revolutions mean violence, and they have their laws, authoritarian laws, and let's not play with them.)

What respect can we have for those who as a principle believe in imposing their ideas on us? What respect can we feel for those who want to keep or re-establish, restore a regime of exploitation and oppression? We may associate with them in order to destroy a common danger that circumstances have created, but this temporary necessity which forces us to associate with our enemies doesn't mean that we respect them, or cease to consider them our opponents and enemies.

We have to make a distinction between what is an alliance for the moment, and what is our final aim. A shipwreck can unite the victim and the executioner, but they remain and will remain enemies, because this alliance between them will only be a suspension of hostilities. Both will jump in the same rescue boat in order to arrive at safety; but I know that once our feet are on land, he will try to eliminate me in order to keep the boat. What respect can I have for such an ally? What respect can I have toward one who, at the moment of danger was saying that we were brothers, while he was hiding a dagger to stick in my back at the first opportunity?

Let us pose the principles clearly: we have no loyalty toward

as you treat me, i treat you

those who in principle have no loyalty toward us; we have no respect towards those who betray us secretly; we have no tolerance toward those who intend to impose themselves on us as soon as they have the power to do so with impunity; principles cannot command us to respect the freedom of those who as a principle suppress our liberty.

I'm not going to tell the truth to a hypocrite, to the deceitful, because he would make me his victim; I would decapitate the executioner before he decapitates me; I would put the tyrant in chains in order to stop him from tyrannizing me; and whoever persists in exploiting me, I will give him a pickax and make him sweat some of that blood he wants to make me sweat.

Cynical philosophy?... Why? The foolish can be educated by example, the wicked by making them drink some of the poison that they force others to drink. And to our misfortune they are those who rule the society in which we live. And it is with these exploiters, present and future tyrants, that we must form an antifascist alliance, because they are still those who dominate a great part of the ignorant masses who serve as a stepping stone for their ambitions, for future little or big dictators.

A Necessary Distinction

Let's not commit the error of naiveté by taking scoundrels as our brothers, simply because they continuously make little fraternal speeches in order to ensnare idiots. Knowing the aims they pursue, we should also know at what point we should give them our trust. But let's abandon also our little speeches to unity, loyalty, proletarian fraternity, the spirit of sacrifice, and mutual tolerance, etc, etc, since we are the only ones who believe in them, and willing to put them into action, because in so doing we become ridiculous to all this Machiavellian scum.

If we have to march together against fascism, let's do it, but without diminishing our dignity by exalting personalities who don't deserve even the minimum respect; without raising our voices in song to a unity with political parties which live off falsehoods toward us;

and without keeping alive the illusion of being able to exchange the egoistic, sectarian, hypocritical, and exclusive authoritarian nature of our opponents temporarily allied with us with loyalty, generosity, sacrifice, disinterested cooperation, and tolerance on our part—which our opponents are in no way disposed to imitate; to which they only render homage in words, in order to put us to sleep in our good faith, so that they may destroy us more easily when our cooperation will no longer be useful.

Will we stop being foolish, at some time in the political struggle? We shall be continuously surprised in our good faith on the part of those who call themselves friends of the people and the revolution, and in reality are only traitors? It is time to get out of our century-old political infancy, if we don't want to continue to be the eternal victims, after serving as cannon fodder in all revolutions.

The circumstances don't ask only for audacity, a spirit of sacrifice, and iron will on the part of anarchists. They also ask for maturity, revolutionary strategy, and a good dose of shrewdness and perspicacity in our capacity of opposing and stopping the political ambitions and aspirations of other parties' counter-revolution. And the anarchist movement in the political arena has demonstrated many things except these. For the politicians it has been a children's game, that of tricking and leading by the nose the anarchists to where the politicians want. And where they have wanted to lead us has been to our perdition. And to that they will surely lead us, if we don't stop being so foolishly generous and tolerant, for the freedom of those whose only aspiration is to suppress our freedom.

ON THE FRONT OF MÁLAGA

I have arrived at Almería at 5 o'clock in the morning, and I decide to proceed immediately to the front of Málaga which is 95 kilometers from here, and a little further than Motril. Why Málaga

on the front of málaga

has been lost is the problem that is torturing my mind, for we know little about the battle that has taken place over there. Has it been an error of strategy? Has there been treason? Perhaps we'll never know.

Now, to go 95 kilometers I need some means of transportation. I am lucky, because as I walk along the road in that direction, buses and trucks loaded with the militia come along headed for the front to give relief to the other troops. They are thirteen buses and trucks which form three companies, in the great majority communists, because this is the front where they dominate, with communist commandants. All of Andalucía.

It was in Málaga, and in some villages, where the communists had many adherents from the beginning, and their organization was strong, that the military disaster happened; at the beginning, they had been victorious over the fascists. Why did this disaster happen? This is what has left many suspicions in many people. Was there treason of some kind?

In the bus in which they make room for me there is the section of command. The sergeant is at my side and the other ranks I don't know.

We arrive at the foot of the Sierra Nevada and from there we must proceed on foot. A very tiring way and along very dangerous trails where you lose your footing very easily. Luckily the mules are carrying most of the load, and helped by some small donkeys... who having four legs, instead of only two, like us bipeds, seem to be able to keep more steady. There are hours and hours of walking, and it is only around 3 o'clock in the afternoon that we arrive near the first lines, from which I had a great desire to look down and see in the distance Sevilla. If we had not lost that city at the beginning, after heroic struggle against the fascist forces, perhaps the war would have been won?

Because it is there in Sevilla that the fascists helped Franco in transporting his troops from Africa, which put him in position to start his conquest of Spain.

And finally, very tired, we arrive at the top of the mountain and after making the presentations, the commandant, for the benefit of the *periodista extranjero*, makes a little speech to the company before they go to replace the other company in the first line... instead of letting the militia breathe in peace a while after so much climbing. But such are the commanders of all armies.

“Don’t retreat a single step!” he shouts at them in a bombastic voice. “And if your leaders should run away... kill them!... But if you do the same... we will kill you!”

The lesson that he wanted to impart to them was this last, since it isn’t even conceivable that the communist leaders were the ones to run away... heroes being without fear. And naturally, being in a communist company, nobody answers him, the troop not being permitted to answer their leaders back.

“We are in a very communist-disciplined company,” whispers the commissar, almost in my ear.

“Punishment for those who commit any undisciplined act!” insists the commissar, sternly. Which instead of impressing me, makes me irritated, as so much automatism I find repulsive. But I cannot tell him this, as I want to arrive at the line of fire, at about a hundred yards away, and if I would tell him my dissent toward such methods of slaves and masters, I would never have arrive at the line of fire.

But in spite of all my silence, I still didn’t reach the first lines, from where, at a distance, with binoculars, as I was told while climbing the mountain, Sevilla could be seen, which I doubted, although possible, in a clear day.

Betrayed by the Durruti Cap

It was precisely the cap that betrayed me. The one à la Durruti that I was wearing. Knowing that, to the communists, anarchism is indigestible, I had hidden the cap under my jacket, a little embarrassed. But the captain saw me hide it and he recognized the cap, then he told the commissar, who told it to the commandant, who threw

betrayed by the durruti cap

me a look full of anger, as if I had committed treason. Then the three of them got together in conference, aside, commenting excitedly as if they had discovered an enemy. With a smile then, I put on the cap as if to challenge them, while I felt like laughing.

The commissar came near and asked again for my papers... discovering that on my safe conduct signed by Miaca giving me permission to visit all fronts, day or night, there were already a dozen stamps of all the commands of the Madrid fronts, and also those of Andújar and Pozoblanco, but it was lacking the one of Almería, as I didn't stop there long enough to get it. He had his good excuse, and he told me that without that authorization he was sorry that I could not visit their small piece of trench... so important... (from which no shot could be heard).

Then I had to explode and tell them that their sectarianism never abandoned them, not even in front of the enemy. And that they could *ir a hacerse una puñeta*, which is quite an insult in Spanish. And I was so furious that it took me only an hour to go down the mountain, for what it took us so many hours to climb, at the risk of breaking my neck.

Communist Sectarianism in Almería

After descending the mountain, I continued to Gualchos, where I listened to the horrifying tale from some refugee about the evacuation of Málaga. While I was taking notes of what they were telling me, two soldiers appeared and began to reproach me for doing this without presenting myself to the communist political commissar and the commander of the village. Still furious for what had happened to me on top of the mountain, I answered them that if at each place I arrive I would need to seek the chiefs, I would not have the time to talk with the people and the soldiers; and besides, I was authorized to do my work of information in the form that I wanted, as I was as revolutionary as anybody around there. And even more revolutionary, I added with some vengeance for what had happened to me. I had de-

cided to challenge such sectarianism even violently, if they provoked me, no matter what would happen. I knew that I was risking my skin in that communist feud, but it was already too long that I was boiling inside for all the cowardices that their leaders were committing against the anarchists.

After I had heard all what interested me about Málaga I told the soldiers that now I could see their superiors. They took me to a small house in the woods where the leaders were eating; and after presenting to them the safe-conduct and finding it in order, they invited me to eat with them.

Although I was very hungry, since in the whole day I had eaten only the piece of bread that the good sergeant had given me, and that the readers already know from my previous correspondence (an article which like a dozen others never reached the paper, because in the hurry to mail it I committed the imprudence of mailing from cities other than Madrid, and for sure the censorship in the hand of enemies of anarchism must have destroyed them), I still declined the invitation.

In the fronts, naturally, I accepted food from wherever it came; offers that the militia men always made with good heart, even if those who offered the food had not too much of it themselves. The same offers we used to make ourselves when we were going to the fronts of Madrid, Mauro Bajatierra, Nobruzan and I distributing cognac, wine, tobacco, and other things which we gave to all the militia, be they anarchists, communists, or of any other party, as I have already mentioned. It is part of the fraternity of the fronts, where, the danger being common, solidarity is more profoundly felt.

Among Sectarians

But here I had fallen among sectarians of the worst kind, as are all the communist leaders, who, even not far from the enemy, could not show a little loyalty toward those who were their allies in the struggle against fascism. And I wanted to be independent in order to be able to answer them as they deserved in case of provocation. Therefore I told

among sectarians

the commissar that the only thing I wanted was to go to sleep. Then they insisted that I remain there, as they had empty rooms. And immediately they had one prepared for me. I accepted, as night had come, although I would have preferred to sleep on a haystack where the boys who had told me about Málaga were sleeping. I accepted coffee, as I realized that they had a great desire to talk to me, which was also what I wanted, to tell them a few things about what I wanted, after so many provocations suffered what had happened to me on the mountain; and these I realized had not recognized the Durruti cap, therefore they didn't know that I was an anarchist. One of their enemies...

We spoke of various things, including the loss of Málaga. They agreed the town had been sold out. And naturally they could not miss out on also speaking of the “anarchists” (they had one in front of them) although by now I was convinced that the news of what had happened with me on the mountain had not reached them yet or they would be on guard, and keep their mouths shut. And it was precisely the mention of Málaga that served them as the starting point for an all out attack against the hated anarchism, red flag to the eyes of the communist bull.

“Yes,” says the political commissar, “Málaga has been sold out, and if we had not hindered it, even Almería would have been sold to the fascista. And here the traitors would have been the anarchists.”

“This is very interesting. Relate, relate, to me what happened, comrade.”

And the commissar here was swimming in his preferred sauce. Here he had in front of him an American journalist, and what better occasion to hit and defame the terrible, anarchist enemy?

The Anarchist Maroto

“Well, it was like this,” continued the commissar. “Do you know the anarchist Maroto?”

“I have never heard of him. Who is he?” (In reality, I had already visited him in jail. In Andalucía, he was considered a kind of

Durruti for his heroic activities against fascism. But I let the red fascist continue the attack.)

“Maroto is a scoundrel! A fascist! In Granada, in the hands of the fascists, he used to go in and out when he wanted. It could only be with the permission of the fascists. After the fall of Málaga he came to Almería with his column. He wanted to arrest the governor and deliver the city to the fascists, the governor being a communist.”

“The criminal! This I will tell to America. These anarchists... yes, they must be fascists... if they do this.”

“They do this everywhere.”

“Deliver cities to the fascists?...” And I was boiling inside.

“If they could not do it here, it is because we communists stopped them.”

Why We Don't Take Huesca and Zaragoza

“You communists must be very strong if you can hinder this?”

“Oh! everybody comes to us. Even the bourgeoisie. And now I'm going to reveal to you about Huesca, so that you can put it in the paper. There also the anarchists are in agreement with the fascists. And when we saw this, we sent there the International Column in order to take Huesca. They advanced toward the city, and when they were ready to enter it, the anarchists shot them in the back. They had to retreat, take thirty or forty anarchists and shot them right there.”

I could hold back no more, and indignation must have showed in my face, because this model of Loyola started to stammer.

International Column that Evaporates

“Could you tell me which International Column went to Huesca?” I asked him.

“The International Column... you know?”

“I know... but what battalion, what company took those thirty or forty anarchists and shot them because they started shooting at your backs, while you communists were at the point of taking Huesca?”

international column that evaporates

“This I... don’t know.”

“When did this thing happen?”

“Not long ago.”

“When and where, exactly? I have to give precise information to the American public about this anarchist treachery.”

“There ... around Huesca... I couldn’t specify the day.”

“Which anarchist battalion was it that started shooting at the backs of the International Column?” I continued to ask the communist commissar.

“I... don’t know.”

“And... do you at least know the names of those who the International Column shot for having shot at their backs while they were taking Huesca?”

“I... don’t know.”

What could I do with such a scoundrel? What could be done with similar scum who have started this vile and counterrevolutionary work against the anarchists?

“So... it is... that you know nothing... but tell all,” I attack him. “You speak in that way, by order, to slander the anarchists in everything, without knowing if it is the truth or lies. You are irresponsible! And if you know that what you are saying are lies, you are someone I don’t even want to qualify, because words would not be enough.”

I went to bed, but I was so indignant that I wasn’t able to sleep, although I was dead tired. And instinctively I put the pistol over the small table near the bed... just in case. It was perhaps the unconscious thought of those workers, some of them of the CNT, that the communists murdered barbarously in a small village of Castilla a short time before, which our press revealed extensively to the people. I could not say so. The fact is that I got out of bed and without making any noise I locked the door from the inside, feeling more reassured with this precaution. Although just the same I wasn’t able to sleep because the fleas were devouring me. In these parts all kind of animals can be found.

In the morning we separated coldly. I went up to Adra with a truck. The driver, in a moment of trust, told me, referring to the political commissar of whom I told him all his lies:

“That son of a puta passes all day long doing nothing, without even taking care to bring us a paper. And eating like a pig, while we eat shit!”

I Visit Comrade Maroto Again in Almería's Jail

This time I find him in the place of the army. Maroto is a robust man and of middle age. He is an open type, frank and with the simplicity of a child. I tell him what the commissar said of him:

“Tell me where I can find this canaille, so when these communist skunks let me go, I'll visit him to break his neck. I was sending the comrades by unknown paths up to the doors of Granada to help other comrades to escape from the fascist inferno. In a single night we helped more than one hundred to escape. And this because we have the courage they don't have. And this scum knows that the other comrades and I have come to Almería to reveal to the people all the dirty tricks that the communists are committing against our organization. And it is for this that they don't want to free me. And these canailles know very well that when not long ago I was to be freed, and their communist governor wanted them to sign a telegram, to be sent to the government in Valencia opposing my freedom, even they didn't have the shamelessness to sign such infamy.”

And the hatred of the governor against Maroto is so great that it reached the point of sending some comrades of Maroto to the warship *Jaime I* with the order to shoot them. Luckily some anarchists comrades were on the boat as sailors and stopped such a crime from being committed.

FREEDOM IN CATALUÑA UNDER THE ANARCHISTS AND NOW

Whoever has lived in Cataluña until a few months ago and comes back now will not fail to notice a great change in public life. From the beginning of the revolution of the 19th of July of last year, up to the formation of the Negrín government with communists predominant in it, Cataluña under the anarchists' dominance has lived a free life, idyllic, happy, except for the concern of the war, such as the proletariat has never lived before. In spite of the incertitude and the enormous sacrifices that war imposed on everybody, the present offered many compensations.

When had the proletariat been able to realize a part of its dreams of possessing the wealth that it produced? When had peasants felt themselves to be the owners of the land over which they were sweating from generation to generation, land that gave so many fruits, while they were dying of hunger? While now, for the heroism of their efforts, for the audacity of their struggle, and of their thoughts, the machine, the factory in which they were exploited, had passed into their hands and into their ownership? The exploiting bourgeoisie had disappeared, and so also the parasitic and oppressive State. The Church, the tyranny of the spirit, and the leech of the poor, was demolished; and with it the domination that it exercised upon the ignorant masses, the proletarian revolution having carried it away like a hurricane!

And what had remained of the power of money? The speculator, the banker, all the vampires who suck the blood of the people had been exterminated or put to flight, and at last the people could breathe. The bourgeoisie, with its ally the church, and reactionary army supporting them, had been wiped away. And this principally by the work of the anarchists. At last, under the humanist spirit and tolerance of the anarchist philosophy the working people of all ideas were feeling like brothers, and united in their effort for the common good, and an era of liberty for all useful men had begun and was developing in order to

assure the happiness and the well-being of everyone.

And in spite of the fact that the revolution, due to the enormous sacrifices of the anti-capitalist war, had not been able to go to the limits of its maximum realization, the Spanish proletariat (or that of any country), had never enjoyed so much freedom, except for the short experiments of the Russian revolution, experiments that were strangled by communist tyranny.

And when we speak of freedom, we are not speaking of what manifests itself in the abstract world of thoughts. We are speaking of that liberty that manifests itself in all senses: in the political sense, in the social sense, in the economic sense; freedom of thought as well as practical realizations.

Nine months of anarchist supremacy in the public life of Cataluña; nine months of absolute liberty for all antifascist parties and organizations. It can be said that, the anarchists being the dominant force, Cataluña has been the paradise of liberty. All anti-fascist parties manifested and propagated themselves in the most absolute freedom, and the idea never came to the anarchists to suppress anyone's activity, simply because the anarchists had the power to do it. Only to think of it, for the anarchists, it would have been a monstrosity, or a crime; and an attack against the rights of the other anti-fascist sectors to spread their ideas without any restriction.

Those who, under the dominance of anarchism, didn't enjoy any liberty, were the fascists who had prepared the conflict. Against these enemies of the people the anarchists were ruthless, inexorable!

And now? What is happening now that the anarchists, in spite of the fact that they still preserve all their syndicalist forces, have lost the supremacy that they had before? Now that the communist-bourgeois counter-revolution has installed itself without restriction in the organs of the State?

The picture has profoundly changed. The old vices, the same plots for the possession of power have reappeared. The freedom of the working people has been restricted, its rights of meeting and of

demonstration are hindered, the spreading of its doctrine, specially the anarchist, is censured and suppressed under any pretext. The social conquest of the workers are attacked and destroyed, while when the anarchists were prevailing they were supported, stimulated, defended, no matter to which party they belonged.

And while the freedom of the anarchists is restricted, and they are persecuted, imprisoned, and killed, their agrarian, and industrial collectives destroyed, the enemies of the proletarians receive, from the government of the counter-revolution, protection and restitution of their old power.

And the bourgeoisie that remains recovers its old position, while when the anarchists dominated the bourgeois that remained looked for all means to be forgotten, to pass unobserved in the eyes of the working people. If some of those riches that they had stolen from the workers in the good times of bourgeois domination remained to them, they didn't dare to show them in public because this would have provoked their expropriation, their elimination. The bourgeoisie that remained feigned to be honest, dead, and all that it could hope was to make themselves be forgiven the past crimes without being exterminated as bourgeoisie.

And it felt so weak and impotent, that it proclaimed that its era was finished, and that we had entered into the era of the proletariat. The little bourgeoisie had become so cowardly, that they did nothing but pay tribute to the working class in order to make its existence tolerated.

But today things have changed. The communist betrayal toward the working class has reinforced the power of the middle class so much, (yesterday weakened and almost totally demolished by anarchists) that, today it dares, already in association with communists and socialists, reformists to attack the working class and try to stop its economic and political gains, in order to force the working class to retreat to the times of its slavery.

With the advance of the counter-revolution and the reaffir-

mation of bourgeois power, there have also reappeared all the defects and vices of the bourgeois regime, like the return of prostitution and beggary, resulting from the decrease of the power of the working masses, due again to the unbridled liberty permitted to the capitalists to exploit the working people needs in order to enrich themselves, and at the same time, through hunger, crush the revolutionary hopes of emancipation of the poor people.

Today, while the anarchists again fill up the jails of Barcelona for the crime of energetically defending the revolutionaries' advances for the working class, the government frees the priests and the friends of Franco, and many of the declared fascists, some of them condemned to three and more years of jail by the military tribunals.

It is like this that the government of the Popular Front prepares the restoration of the bourgeoisie and of anti-proletarian reaction. Where the anarchists don't dominate anymore, reaction raises its head.

Great Triumph of the CNT in Belchite

At this point in order to close the slanderous tongues against the anarchists, tongues that spread around the lies that the anarchists refuse to fight the fascists on the front of Aragón, it is good to reproduce here the bulletin that the CNT has published on the heroic struggle that the anarchists have just accomplished against fascism on this front; since the counter-revolutionaries in the government and in the press will not recognize this glory, this triumph, which they will appropriate for themselves. Here is the Bulletin of the CNT which no enemy of anarchism will dare, this time, to deny:

"Belchite has fallen in our power this afternoon. The men of the 25th division—composed of anarcho-syndicalist forces—have covered themselves with glory, because to them goes the principal honor of this victory. CNT Madrid."

The FAI-CNT Conquer in Aragón

Until not long ago the republican and communist press were

speaking with contempt of the Aragón front. They were saying that it is a lazy front, that it is a front that does not move, that it is a front that has conquered nothing. And this is in order to slander the anarchists, knowing that the real cause was that the government was not giving them the necessary arms to conduct an attack successfully.

Now in sending war material, they have also sent communist leaders: Lister, Klever, Walter and others. And the worst of it is that the command of Aragón has been delivered to these leaders who knew nothing of the ground and the forces operating in this sector.

With this the politicians of the army wanted to achieve two things: to take away the credit from the anarchist commandants of the divisions who for more than a year were operating in Aragón, who never retreated one step in all their actions and who had passed weeks and weeks on the front pushing back the enemy with twelve bullets per gun, and who knew the ground to perfection, and for that reason are the best qualified to direct the operations. And, the other reason was that they wanted to enhance the capacity of the communist commanders, who had nothing to do in Aragón, but who belong to that communist party which now from the government in Valencia imposes its will in the conduct of the war or that party imposes. In this way a member of the Generalidad Staff, comrade Yordi, militant of the CNT, has been replaced, and the command delivered to somebody who perhaps for the first time had set foot on Aragón soil. Comrades Ortiz and Javier were forbidden to direct the operations, while this command was given to Walter and Klever, both communists. But in spite of all this, the men of the FAI-CNT have been the first to enter Quinto, Pina, Belchite, Mediana, Zuera, and the village of Albartón, as well as in other places.

All the assault brigades which were directed by the comrades of the CNT-FAI have accomplished the orders given by the command, without retreating a moment, while the same thing cannot be said of the other brigades.

The operations of Aragón have been conducted with so

much favoritism that the military man Sánchez Plaza, who was directing the hardest operations in the siege of Belchite, has been substituted by the communist leader Walter, when it was obvious, without any doubt, that the place would be taken. When Belchite was completely besieged; when they were fighting in the streets, when there were only three points to capture in the capital, the federal troops, also commanded by anarchist commanders, received the order to abandon the Plaza and go immediately to another sector of the front, while a few *Guardias de Asalto* led by a communist commander were left to complete the occupation.

In this way the General Staff and everybody could give the honor of having occupied Belchite to a commander who was not in Aragón, and who had not taken part in the hardest battles of the siege, but who is a communist. This not only has happened in Belchite, but also in each of the other villages taken, where the same thing happened. In order that we should not be accused of not telling the truth, we will mention the concrete activities of the anarcho-syndicalist forces in Aragón.

The Second, Third and Fourth Battalions of the mixed 120 Brigade of the Durruti Division took the station of Pina, advanced on Quinto and took part in its capture. These same battalions took the position of Bonastre, and they continued to advance until reaching the Puente del Ebro bridge. From there they were relieved because they were exhausted.

Three battalions of the 110th Mixed Brigade, also belonging to the Durruti Division, took the important position of Pedrusos. The communist journalists who had been invited to see the operation attributed the conquest of Pedrusos to the communist forces, while it was the Durruti *tribu* which had taken it.

The 116th Brigade of the Ortiz division, together with the 32nd Brigade, took Codo, also an important position, after Quinto and Belchite. In order to judge the participation of this brigade in the operations, we shall mention that they had suffered the loss of

three captains and two commanders who were going in front of their forces. And besides the conquest of Codo, the 116th Brigade has efficiently cooperated to the conquest of Belchite.

The 117th Brigade of the Ortiz division, put at the disposition of Pérez Salas, took the position of Novia del Viento, the bridge of Puebla de Albortón, the village and station of Aznara, Casa de Romanicos, Carbeneda, Veyo Sierra de la Serna, and the station of Fortín de Belchite. In the conquest of Belchite the anarcho-syndicalist 153rd Brigade also contributed.

The first forces that entered Belchite belong to our 118th Brigade. The 125th, 126th, and 127th, belonging to the 28th Division (Francisco Ascaso) and commanded by our comrade Javier did all supporting operations ordered them by the command. These brigades also have been put under the orders of communists and had very heavy losses.

All our comrades have behaved very well, having received many commendations from those responsible, while the communist Trueba, commander of the 27th Division (Carlos Marx) has been relieved from command. The same has happened to Klever, commander of the 45th Division, although he, through the influence of politicians, was put back in command.

Here the participation of the anarcho-syndicalist forces on the Aragón front is clearly stated. And this is irrefutable proof that if weapons had been given to the men of Aragón, who knows, perhaps the war would not be in the situation in which it is now, and perhaps the war against fascism would have ended long ago.

THE WAR ON THE SEA OF SPAIN OR THE UNKNOWN WAR

The war that is going on in the Spanish waters is almost completely unknown in foreign countries.

And even here in Spain. It is not rare that people ask:

“And what is our navy doing? Why doesn’t it move? Why doesn’t it attack?”

The truth is that the war on the sea, because of special conditions, in order to be effective has to remain almost entirely anonymous, as well as the heroism of our sailors.

Months ago our Libertarian Youth posted large placards on the walls of loyalist Spain which said:

“Each sailor, a hero!”

There were those who thought that both our Libertarian Youth, as well as the sign, were exaggerating. Nobody had ever doubted the valor of our sailors, but that everyone were a hero... this... Beh, it must be the enthusiasm of youth... or a joke.

And yet if not all our sailors are heroes, there is no doubt that in order to sail our seas a good dose of heroism is necessary, because the danger of being sent to the bottom of the sea by the fascist submarines of the Italians and Germans, at the service of Franco, is enormous everywhere.

How the Fascist Boats... Miraculously Multiply Themselves

At the beginning of the conflict, the loyalist part of the navy that remained in our hands, numerically, was superior to that part of the navy that remained in the hands of the fascists, while today it is in a state of absolute inferiority and half paralyzed in its movements, due to the shameless help that the navies of Mussolini and Hitler are giving to the Spanish fascists.

Franco was in possession of two modern cruisers at the beginning of hostilities; today he possesses a number of them which go under the same name. Therefore it happens that the Cervera bombards and sinks some of our boats a thousand kilometers away from each other. This means that Franco possesses not one, but several ships which go under the same name, furnished to him by Italy and Germany.

how the fascists boats... miraculously multiply themselves

And of the 25 submarines (approximately) that Spain possessed the 19th of July, to Franco remained only three; but today his submarines, or to be more exact, the Italian and German submarines in the service of Franco, are everywhere waiting to sink our boats. It can be said that there is no boat of ours that arrives in our ports which has not been pursued, gunned, or torpedoed by war boats, airplanes, or fascists' submarines.

If they arrive safely at their destination it is mostly due to the audacity and constant vigilance of our sailors on merchant ships, as well as on war ships, which generally serve as escort as soon as they enter in dangerous waters. But nobody would realize this constant heroism unless you have seen it yourself in action, and without having gone yourself through this danger.

Anonymous Heroism

We have to be in one of these small boats, with the constant worry that at any moment may appear one of these Cerveras on the horizon and begins to bombard you, or that a squadron of airplanes come out from clouds and rains bombs on you, or of that mysterious object that looks like a monstrous cigar, which has been following you for hours, and you know that he is just waiting that your vigilance gets distracted a moment in order to stick out its antenna and shoot a torpedo at your belly, which in a few seconds will send your boat to the bottom of the sea. It will be then that you will understand the constant tension of your nerves while scanning the horizon, or the surface of the sea or the sky, studying with apprehension any small object that seems to appear between the clouds or on the waves or under them... which can mean the presence of the enemy that will bring you death.

All this heroism, for the secret character of this struggle, must remain anonymous. But in spite of that it is not less deserving of admiration than the heroism of our combatants in the trenches, which in spite of all traitors will remain the trenches of the revolution..

Voyage Through the Mediterranean

After being present in the war in the fields and in the cities of Spain, could the war correspondent ignore the war that the Spanish people carry on in the sea against fascism? I had a great desire to see with my own eyes what was occurring on our seas. Therefore, in spite of the little sympathy that deep waters raise in this correspondent (I never learned to swim, because where I grew up there was no water deeper than one foot, and the first time I saw the sea I was twenty years old, and as soon as I smelled it I felt sea sick. So much for the romance for the sea), I took the first opportunity that was offered to me to observe this battlefield. And I have to confess that in contemplating the waters without bottom, where the fish swim placidly, but that I would not be able to do the same, in the case that I had to go to keep them company, more than once on this trip, surrounded by danger, I felt that my heart beat faster, and a shudder went through all my body. But I should not make these confessions... since I live in a world of heroes.

The boat we boarded seemed a dwarf compared to the huge Normandie on which I had traveled. But in spite of the smallness of our boat we felt proud of it because of the precious cargo it was carrying in her belly... besides ourselves. I will not mention the name of the boat, nor its itinerary for reasons easy to understand; but although it will remain a mystery, let nobody think that it is a mythical boat, a product of my imagination. The boat, as well as the trip are real, not imaginary. And the proof of it is, that although while I'm writing this my feet are on firm ground, still it seems to me to be on the dancing waters...

We were three getting into the boat, the only passengers. The correspondent, and Ruth and Zina, two courageous Polish comrades, who also wanted to be a part of this struggle, and the fifty sailors of the crew, to whose courage and vigilance we had to entrust our lives, as little could we do to help them, none of us having any experience of ships. A situation rather unpleasant for us, since nothing inspires more

trust than the power of being ourselves the guardians of our lives.

We knew that our lives were in good hands, however, because just a few days past the comrade captain had a fist fight with some fascist spy right in the city from which we departed, a fascist who wanted to know where the ship was going, and what it was carrying. And luckily the hands that were guiding our boat were anarchist hands, and therefore we were doubly protected from the fascist enemy.

But we took all precautions to leave the port as secretly as possible, because in that port there are four different kinds of fascist espionage which function to the profit of Franco, as the captain explained to me: Hitler's, Mussolini's, Franco's, and that of the French fascists, who all together watch each movement of our ships when they are outside of our territory.

We parted as silently as possible when all around us seemed deserted. And while we were in neutral waters toward the dawn, we received the order not to leave the neutral line until our escort boat had arrived, an armed launch which came on hour later, and signaled us to follow her.

Spanish Sea

From the moment that we entered Spanish waters we had to follow the coast continuously, some times at a kilometer from the coast, some other times at only a few hundred yards from the land, in case that we would be torpedoed. Two rescue boats were ready to be put to sea, if a torpedo would hit us; having also the order to throw ourselves toward the land—if we had the time—in order to save all what we could before sinking. The armed escort protected us from the side of the sea with her little gun aimed at the void in search of the enemy that could appear suddenly out of the deep, while the anti-aircraft and the machine guns were always in position to shoot. We, in spite of the “biscuits” we were carrying to shoot at the fascists, were totally powerless to defend ourselves, because the dear friendly nations are forbidding us to carry any defense when we entered their waters.

It was 6:30 when we entered the dangerous zone, and im-

mediately our escort approached to instruct us what to do in case of attack. There are something like twenty men in the launch, and all young. Even the captain is only twenty-six or twenty-seven years old. From the observation cabin he gives rapid instructions to his men.

"On guard!" and this he tells also to us, "there are submarines in ambush!" That is all.

We throw them bread that they need, and our captain throws them a pound of tobacco. He is applauded for this, as tobacco in Spain now is more scarce than bread. And the launch detaches itself from us to take position at about three hundred yards. In the most dangerous points where the submarines can hide more easily, from beyond the mountains comes out some of our airplanes which fly around us scrutinizing the depth of the water in search for the silhouette of a submarine, or it goes to scrutinize the horizon in order to discover the presence of some fascist ship or airplane. And when it discovers nothing it disappears again behind the mountains.

Fascist Submarine in Action

The morning passes perfectly tranquil, and while coasting allows us to admire the marvelous landscape in our view. Soon another merchant vessel has joined us. Yesterday, in trying to go alone, a submarine sent a torpedo, which didn't sink the vessel thanks to the quickness of the captain in turning the boat with full speed, in order to seek the not too deep waters of the coast. The torpedo went aground in the sand without exploding. Today she goes escorted by another armed launch, and we soon leave them behind for their slower speed.

Toward 2 o'clock in the afternoon an officer shows us on the coast four pieces of wood in a square, which mark the point where the *Ciudad de Barcelona* was torpedoed and sunk by a submarine, in less than five minutes. More than fifty people lost their lives in that disaster, passengers and crew. The speed with which the boat filled with water gave no time to the passengers, who were in the cabins, to run to the deck.

fascist submarine in action

A little later we go down to the cabin but a crew man runs to tell us to immediately go on deck while our guns start shooting. Who is shooting? Are we attacked? In an instant we are on deck. It was our launch that was shooting at a submarine which had put out the antenna to torpedo us, thinking that our escort had not seen them. The comrades of the launch informs us afterwards that the submarine was following us for an hour, waiting for the opportunity to torpedo us. But our comrades had noticed their shape under the water, and were watching them without pursuing them for fear that some other submarine was in ambush and they had not yet discovered it. After shooting a few times at the submarine, it disappeared.

An hour later the same submarine or another tried again to come near us. It was discovered and the shooting began again, while we swerved violently in order to be able to run aground in case we were hit by a torpedo. At that moment I noticed that Zina was not with us.

“Where is Zina, where is Zina?” I shouted at Ruth.

“Underneath, underneath... for something urgent!”

In two jumps I was below while shouting:

“Zina! Zina! Where are you? A submarine! A submarine!”

And the shooting was continuing. And there I see poor Zina coming out from the toilet, all white from fright, while all confused holding up her panties. The scene was so comical, that I couldn’t help burst out laughing. We went aground on the shore’s sand, and when the submarine disappeared, we needed all the power of our motors to get free, and go on our way again.

At 7 o’clock in the evening the “biscuits” for the fascists entered safely in the port of Barcelona. At 8 o’clock we were eating fish in a restaurant near the headquarters of the CNT-FAI.

“What a pleasure it is to be here peacefully eating fish, out of danger,” says Ruth.

“Much better than if the fish were eating us,” concludes Zina.

ON THE FRONT OF TERUEL

I passed the night in Montalbán, in a house the forces of Macía Company was occupying. Last night they wanted me to return to Alcañiz because they insisted that it was impossible to pass through the bridge of Teruel, but I refused to go back to Alcañiz, thinking it was an excuse to stop me from going to the Teruel front. I was wrong. That road was really cut. But I absolutely wanted to go to the front. We agreed that I would take the road of Perales, through the mountain. And since I love mountains more than the plains...

I started early in the morning. After walking a few kilometers, a small car with a militiaman reaches me. He offers me the empty seat beside him. He is part of the forces of Macía Company, and he is French. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak the language of Marianne. In a short time we entered Perales, but we were surprised to see that while we were going in, the people were running out, frightened.

"What is going on?" we shouted at them.

"The bombarding planes of the enemy are coming!" whose noise the old motor of our car didn't let us hear. Seventeen trimotors were coming, and we had to flee because to remain in the village would be sure death. But we didn't have time to abandon the car and flee with the others.

The first bomb came down at the entrance of the village as if to seal it and trap us inside. Then at a tremendous speed the explosions advanced toward us. At each explosion the houses collapsed, sending debris in all directions. I couldn't avoid a tragic thought.

"Goodby, life! And also goodby, friends!... What will remain of us in an instant will only be a heap of bloody and inanimate parts... Horrifying to look at!... Lacerated flesh!... What a pity!"

All this flashed through my mind... Instinctively I lower my head... my eyes closed and I cover my ears... Why? I hear a dreadful explosion behind us... then almost simultaneously another in front of

us. The car seems to fly in the air for an infinite time. Perhaps it hadn't gone up more than a few feet, but to me it had seemed an infinite time like a tour of the universe... feeling as if I would never take contact with the earth again... A suspicion crossed my mind at that moment:

"Am I dead?"

A strong shock delivered me from the doubt. The car came down heavily on the ground, leaving me half stupefied. But that made me open my eyes and look around. Things behind and in front of us were still going to pieces, and the debris were coming down like rain, and we were prisoners in the middle of the ruins. And now I remembered that I was not alone. My companion was moving his head all dazed and in a way that seemed comical to me.

"Ah! *nom de dieu!* Ah! *nom de dieu!*"

"Are you wounded?" I asked him.

"What do you say?... Ah! I don't know."

Our persons seem still intact, except for the shakes and shock. But the car had ended its career. With difficulty we succeed in opening the door to get out. It has been awful! We hear shouts and weeping everywhere. Climbing over the ruins the people return. Women and men come out of the ruins with crazy gestures, climb on top of the debris and look around to convince themselves of the extent of the tragedy.

The corpses are brought to the square and are put down in a line on the ground... A piece of skull of one of the corpses is missing. Who was he?... Another has two legs missing... and the fifth in line also has two legs missing. I raise the cover from another and he has his breast crushed... And these other two are two shapeless masses... Oh, horror! They don't look like human beings anymore! They are heaps of separated limbs, arms, legs, fingers, other parts of the bodies. On another the head is missing! It has not been found yet.

AGAIN ON THE GUADALAJARA FRONT

Last night I was walking along the Calle de Alcalá rather bored. The day had passed, too peacefully, and for a war correspondent ... Suddenly I hear a familiar voice that calls me. He is Nobruzan of *Castilla Libre*.

“Noticias de Petirrojo!” he shouts at me.

“Really?... Then we can’t miss this concert... At what time?”

“At 5 o’clock tomorrow morning I will come to pick you up with the ‘Balilla’. A little car that goes everywhere.” Mussolini has been the one who sent this mini-auto to transport bourgeois, and it transports anarchists.

But Nobruzan could not come at 5 o’clock, he only came at eight.

“Now run, run, ‘Balilla’, they have told us that the Italians have come back to the front, after the defeat of Guadalajara, and we can’t be missing at the second beating,” Nobruzan spurs him.

We arrive at Cienfuentes at 10 o’clock, three hours late. The front was just a few kilometers from there. And now, where is it?... Nobody knew, as the front was in movement.

“Where is the old man?” as they call Cipriano Mera affectionately. The “old man” is here... is there... and it seems that he is in all parts, but we can’t find him anywhere. We wanted to know if he at least knew where the front was. At last they tell us to follow a road to a certain position.

“Go forwards, ‘Balilla’, for the soul of Mussolini, that we arrive too late,” Nobruzan almost pushes it.

There come four militia men who jump out of the car and run to embrace Nobruzan. It is Verardini, and the others of the General Staff.

“Well,” Nobruzan asks them. “Has the advance started?”

“Started?” answers Verardini. “We have finished! By now we have already occupied all the villages that we wanted to occupy.”

again on the guadalajara front

“This is treason!” shouts Nobruzan, disappointed. “And we who have come to give you a hand,” he adds, showing them a pistol, a camera, and a bottle of cognac, to keep up the spirits of the combatants. And he uncorks it, passing it around.

Then down runs the General Staff, and we war correspondents remain disappointed. Where do we go?

“Where we hear the shooting,” we say simultaneously. On top of that summit from where we can see Alamillo where the enemy is now after our advance of thirteen kilometers. But we don’t see a trace of the Italians, while we would have liked to see them running once more. But their planes come to bombard us, and we have to hide in the company of some other militia men. We again meet Verardini.

“We have captured seven villages. And 20 by 13 square kilometers... if they seem little for a day’s work by the Fourteenth Division...”

ANARCHIST SIMPLICITY OF MIND

I really want to say innocence of mind, credulity, anarchist gullibility. The anarchist is the easiest person to fool. Generally unable to lie, to betray the word given, it is almost impossible to have it enter in his brain that he may be lied to or betrayed by those who call themselves his allies. Then when he realizes that he has been taken in the snare like a simpleton, he has already been stabbed in the back. And still he can’t believe the bad faith of the assassins, even if he is bleeding all over from a hundred wounds, and hundreds of his comrades are already rotting in jail or in the cemetery.

It is enough for somebody to swear—to most of the anarchists—that he is for the revolution, for that person to be right away taken for a real revolutionary, and for them to go with him, arm in arm—so to speak—shouting: “Revolution!” without it occurring to such anarchists to ask him:

“But you... what revolution do you want?”

“You know... the revolution... Don’t you see the pistol?”

“Yes, I see it... But, now, what do you want to do with it?”

“To kill... the enemies of the working class! My enemies... your enemies... the capitalist enemy...”

Therefore if somebody declares that he is an enemy of capitalism, he is a brother, even if most of the time a traitorous brother, who instead of wanting the abolition of exploitation only wants to replace the old exploiter himself. But that is hard to penetrate in the simple-minded anarchist head, because he is not yet convinced that somebody can call himself anticapitalist, and at the same time be the worst enemy of the workers.

The same happens when false pacifists—at the service of communist imperialism—start making parades for “peace”; and as the anarchists hate wars, there they go like simpletons, like a bunch of sheep parading with them, bleating:

“Hurray for peace! We want peace! Down with the war mongers!” With not a thought occurring to the simpletons anarchists to ask themselves:

“But the peace that these scoundrels really want—is it not by chance war, communist imperialist war, disguised as peace? And I am here like a great idiot playing the part of the ‘fifth column’ of communist imperialism on the march for the conquest of the world?”

(Like there we have that canaille of Castro for years fooling almost all Cubans, including most of the anarchists of the world, passing off as an anticapitalist... “democrat”, who was only making a “democratic” revolution, expropriating capitalism to assure “democratic” liberty, with the anarchist blockheads believing every word he was saying like sacred truth, year after year, while meanwhile he was strangling all freedom of the press, of speech, even of thought, and glorifying himself in the press of the world that he was shooting, practically every day, this enemy of the revolution, that enemy of democracy: bourgeois, workers, peasants, even a boy shot by his order for having refused to wear the Castro Youth uniform; and these

anarchist simplicity of mind

shootings by his count totaling 900 murdered by him in less than a year. And all in order to make the “revolution”. And these innocents of anarchists continue on without asking themselves what kind of “revolution” Castro was making, and even writing him... a love letter, calling him: “Dear Castro”.)

Anarchist naiveté is really infinite! Nobody is a traitor, for the great number of anarchists, if somebody knows how to swear to them with a hypocritical face that he is a “revolutionary” and that he wants the emancipation of the working class. Anarchism everywhere proves that, in spite of all betrayals and murders of anarchists by the thousands since communism is in power, since the end of the First World War. Because anarchists had communists as “comrades” in the underground in the war against Hitler and Mussolini in the guerrilla, in the anarchist press for months you wouldn’t read a single word of criticism against the communists, who were crushing every anarchist movement, and every anarchist in the countries where they rule, as if they were not fascists, red fascists, enemies of all freedom.

These reflections, quite sad, come to my mind now for what happened on one of the fronts of Madrid one day in the company of a very dear comrade, who even threatened me with a revolver, because he thought that I had stopped him from carrying out his humanitarian duty as an anarchist. An act that in thinking of it makes me rather smile, because it seems to me quite comical, although for the comrade was very serious.

It happened with comrade Mauro Bajatierra, as I have already mentioned, war correspondent of the daily CNT. A man all courage and all heart without one thought of malice in his head. For him anybody who was fighting against Franco was a brother. One morning we were approaching the front which was occupied by one of the communist brigades. Leaving the main road, we entered into a small field road only large enough for one vehicle, all the field planted in corn higher than our small car. We had already driven a distance without meeting anyone, although we knew that we were approaching the

front, which seemed at rest, since we didn't hear any shooting.

Then I heard the noise of a vehicle coming, but as in front of us there was a double curve, the high corn prevented me from seeing the vehicle that was coming toward us. Mauro Bajatierra, being rather deaf, naturally didn't hear anything, but I knowing that two vehicles could not pass each other on the small road, with gestures made him understand that another vehicle was coming; then he in order to let it pass drove into the corn, which being so high hid us entirely from the road.

Immediately from the position where the unseen vehicle was I heard a shot, and suspecting some ambush, I drew my pistol and Bajatierra, although he had heard nothing suspecting danger, drew his, naturally a little confused, I trying to make him understand with gestures what was happening. At this moment we see the vehicle that was coming turn the first curve at full speed, make about fifty meters of straight road and then turn the second curve near us, as if in flight disappearing like wind toward the highway from which we had come, only five or six hundred yards away. It was an ambulance. Was it an ambush? Not having heard the shot, Bajatierra makes gestures as if to say:

“Do we go forwards or backwards?”

“Forwards,” I signal him, “but go slowly.” The danger was the same. And I begin to search between the corn with my pistol ready, while he was driving with one hand, while holding the pistol with the other. After turning the second curve, we see a man sprawling in the middle of the road face down. The humanitarian spirit of Bajatierra makes the car jump forward. Near the body we stop the car, and jump out to assist the man. He had received a bullet in the head, and was bleeding. Having stepped out first I touch his face and the flesh was still warm; I touch his pulse, it had stopped; I raised his face, he was dead. I understood immediately!

“An execution!” passed through my mind. Knowing the murderous treachery of the communist leaders toward all those who oppose them or protest against them, somebody must have rebelled in

their brigade, and they liquidated him away from his comrades, in the Stalinist style.

But the innocent Bajatierra understood nothing! He grabbed him to raise him, and bring him to the car, in order, to help him.

“He is dead!” I shouted at him, and I pointed to the hole in the head, forcing him to let the body down. But he wasn’t convinced; I was almost forced to pull him away and enter the car, grabbing the wheel to make him turn it, while I was repeating to him:

“He is dead! He is dead! We can do nothing for him! He is dead! Let’s run! RUN!”

This is what he could not understand. If the man was dead, why did we have to run away?... Like a fury he put the car in motion, and we were lucky that he didn’t succeed in wrecking the car and our necks. When we had traveled about one kilometer on the highway, he entered into a field and when alone he almost threw me out of the car, with flashing eyes pointing the pistol at me for having stopped him from doing his humanitarian duty as a man.

“Why, why did you stop me from helping that poor wounded man?” he was shouting at me, while he was shaking me furiously... I had need of all my calm.

“Mauro!... Dead! Dead! Not wounded! As you would be dead if you had received a bullet in the head”

“But he was the victim of an aggression... and perhaps we could help him!”

“Mauro!... Victim of an *execution*... not of an aggression. Haven’t you understood it yet?... It was not the fascists that assassinated him, but the communists, his own comrades have murdered him!”

“But how can you say that he was murdered by his own communists?” And his eyes were still flashing with fury, although doubts seemed to have penetrated in his mind.

“Think, Mauro, and you will be convinced that it was not an ambush. The man was laying in the middle of the road, no? And how could the ambulance pass him without crushing him? He was in the

ambulance; they threw him out after putting a bullet in his head, in order to make it appear that he was the victim of an ambush."

"But perhaps he was walking and he was the victim of an ambush?"

"And he fell in the middle of the road. And what is the duty of an ambulance? To pick up the wounded or the dead or to flee? And yet still, how could they pass him without running over him, since there was no sign that they had gone through the corn field in order to avoid him?... And I heard only one shot, and the victim was disarmed. Therefore he did not die defending himself like a militia man would have done, being armed here near the front. And why was the ambulance fleeing with such speed, even after they were out of danger? And supposing that they were running away because they were afraid, why didn't they stop when they had reached the highway, asked for help and then come back, instead of disappearing totally?"

"Yes!... Yes!..." started to reflect Mauro. "They really seem to have disappeared in thin air, since they are nowhere to be seen. And the dead man is there waiting for the ambulance..."

"It has been murder! Liquidation Muscovite style! And I bet that if we return now they have already removed the corpse. I suspect that, he was a member of the International Brigade who had rebelled against some ugly things committed by some leader, and in order not to punish him in front of his comrades for fear of a revolt, they liquidated him far from them. And now he has disappeared and is declared a deserter of the International Brigade."

"And I... the simple minded war correspondent of the daily CNT... caught in the act with a corpse of a communist hero... murdered by me..."

"In a plot with another war correspondent, also an anarchist..."

"Two anarchists bandits who sabotage the war of liberation..."

"For which so many good communists sacrifice their lives to make it triumph..."

“Ah! what a sap, what a sap!.... And what a great scandal! What a disaster!”

“Finally you have seen the light!... And Mauro, don’t put a word in the paper about this murder, because they could always accuse us of being anarchist monsters who assassinate communist heroes. liquitated by themselves.”

“Excuse me, Brand, if I have been a little violent,” says the good Mauro.

“Only a little?”

And we started laughing. Really we escaped from a good one. Two birds in a cage which the enemies of anarchism didn’t even need to prepare. We fell in it ourselves without knowing it.

BEHIND THE BARS OF THE COUNTERREVOLUTION

Who am I? A revolutionary. One of the many revolutionaries that today are rotting in jails of the Spain of the Popular Front, forced at the moment to remain anonymous in order not to be victimized by the Stalinist terror of the communist Cheka that today persecutes and murders many revolutionaries; we behind the bars are desperate in our impotence, while outside the gangsterism of the communist police, slowly, methodically, following a well-prepared Machiavellian plan, destroys the revolutionary conquests of the people. And why was I arrested? Like the other five hundred social prisoners here enclosed, 95 per cent anarchists, the others from the POUM, because we have opposed and fought against the treason of this communist gangsterism, like thousands of other revolutionaries in other jails in republican Spain.

My crime?...Very simple. I left the house early in the morning to buy a newspaper, when I heard a bombardment in the neighborhood. Suspecting some betrayal, alarmed, I ran to see against

whom was the shooting. It was against a building occupied by the CNT-FAI. And shooting against them was the *Guardia de Asalto* dominated by the communists. About a thousand of them, armed with all kind of weapons, while inside the building I knew that there could be no more than thirty or forty anarchists, who discovering that the purpose of the provocation was to massacre them, had shut themselves inside, and didn't answer the fire because they were not in any condition to defend themselves against so many aggressors who were firing against them hiding in the houses nearby.

Seeing such infamy, I got furious and I started to scream against the aggressors.

“*Hijos de puta!* At the front they are without arms to fight against the fascists, and you here are using them treacherously to assassinate antifascists! Who are you? Franco's fifth column?”

That was all my crime: accusing counter-revolutionaries of treason! Four Chekists jumped on me and dragged me away while I continued to accuse them of betraying the revolution, while the traitors continued to bombard our comrades trapped inside the building.

Now I have been imprisoned for one month. When they will free me, I don't know. The Cheka doesn't have the habit of telling its victims what it is going to do with them. These five hundred anarchists prisoners also don't know how long they will be kept imprisoned. Here they will remain until the assassins of the revolution, who have become the masters of the life of the people with their violences and murders will please them, since shame and honesty are entirely lacking in them.

His Majesty the Cheka

We'll say it right away. The Cheka, in the political and judicial order, is the superior authority. In the machinery of the State, its power has become supreme. Above the cabinet, above the ministers: its action is law. None of those who call themselves ministers dare by now to oppose the Cheka. It imprisons whomever it pleases, destroys unions, dissolves peasants' and workers' collectives, robs, sequesters,

his majesty the cheka

murders, and is accountable to nobody. The law, the preservation of the republican bourgeois order is what serves as the shield of the Cheka to perpetrate with impunity its criminal actions as the Cheka is above the judges, and it is above justice. While others are judged by the tribunals, it judges itself.

It is at the same time the delinquent and the judge of its own actions, its own iniquity; and naturally it declares itself clean of all counter-revolutionary acts. And having put under absolute gag all words and writings by instituting a most brutal censorship, with men totally servile to it, whoever tries to reveal its wickedness finds it impossible to do so; and trying it clandestinely leads easily to this place, or perhaps the cemetery.

And who composes the Cheka? We can affirm it positively: the political scums, and all the secret reactionaries and philofascist elements of republican Spain. If we designate it as the "fifth column", as I have called them, which is why they carried me here, it would be a name that qualifies them perfectly through the counter-revolutionary work that these elements are realizing in favor of the bourgeoisie and, indirectly, in favor of Franco. The Cheka is made up of a collection of the most cynical elements with absolute insensibility towards the sufferings they inflict on their victims, and of a lack of honesty, and revolutionary proletarian ethics. It is a gang of arrivistes, of men without scruples of any kind, brutal hypocrites, thieves, and assassins.

Here there are men who besides being imprisoned, have been robbed them of everything they had by the Chekists: money, clothes. There have been Chekists who invaded the homes of comrades, took them away as prisoners, and then ransacked everything that there was of value; even leaving dressed in the clothes of the same prisoners. There are two comrades at the Commissariat: from the one they took 1,500 *pesetas*, and from the other 1,300. And they are here, incarcerated for four months, and in spite of many requests they have made for the return of their money, it has not appeared. Vanished... into somebody's pockets. This is the honesty of the communist Cheka.

And of these kinds of facts we could tell dozens of stories.

Behind these bars, I will reveal how this band of Torquemadas, naming themselves communists, are stabbing the revolution in the back. Unmasking their abomination is unmasking the most colossal swindle that they are perpetrating against the Spanish proletariat. I will reveal the nature of this counter-revolution, and its association and sympathy toward the bourgeois and fascist elements, as we can observe it every day in this prison. It would be enough to say that while the prison is getting filled ever more with anti-fascists, in great part anarchists, the Cheka is emptying it of fascists. That is the whole truth.

The Statistics Speak

When the Cheka began to function openly, the regular jail became too small to lodge all their victims. The Hotel Falcón has been transformed into a jail, and the "Lechera" into another. There are a dozen others, new, public and clandestine. All of them are full of revolutionaries. And while the the repressive forces of the Cheka increase in strength, so increase also the number of social prisoners, their victims.

Thousands and thousands of *Guardias de Asalto*, Chekists, squealers, spies, Chekist provocateurs invade every place, occupying every place. They shoot workers to expel them even from their organizations.

It is a real tragedy for the Spanish people, after so many sacrifices, to see this Stalinist pest put its foot everywhere. To me, after being taken to the general quarter of the Cheka at the Puerta del Angel, already sadly famous, I was transferred to the Jefatura. Two days later, at 1:30 in the morning, they took me in front of the commissar to make my declaration. At my question why they continued to hold me prisoner, the judge answered that there were no specific accusations against me (naturally, how could they report what I had shouted at the Cheka, on account of the treason that they were committing?) that the same day they would free me. The shamelessness of these

the statistics speak

Stalinists! A month after I am still in jail without any specific accusation against me. This Stalinist Cheka not only is cynical and criminal, but also a master of hypocrisy.

In entering the “Lechera” I found forty-two prisoners. During the night this increased to ninety-six. Among them were more than sixty belonging to the CNT-FAI and Libertarian Youth, two of the Estat Catalá; one of them offering to free him and incorporate him in the Cheka, although he was there as a speculator, some of the UGT as deserters and one of the PSUC, a communist, for falsely impersonating a captain of the army. The anarchists are here for their affiliation, or for having called the police cabrones or a similar insult at the moment of the arrest. Among the comrades there are also six war disabled.

The “Authentic” Workers of the UGT and of the P.S.U.C.

After a few days of my arrival at the “Lechera” the prisoners had already increased to 143. The last were twenty-four “Alpinists”, while two days before twenty-four more had entered. The “Alpinists” are the deserters who try to escape to France through the Pyrenees. Who are these “Alpinists?” Their clothes reveal them immediately. If they wear *alpargatas*, poor clothes, have callouses on their hands, they are of the CNT; if they arrive with good shoes, beautiful clothes, and fine hands they are of the UGT or the PSUC, communist, or some republicans; their clothes always tell who they are.

There are two classes of deserters: the anarchists, and the others. The anarchists are very rare, someone who thinks that at the front now is fought a war like any other war, and that the revolutionary war has to be fought away from the army—against the counter-revolution; and the “others”, a number every day larger, who desert for cowardice or philofascism. The anarchists generally don’t escape from Spain. They refuse to be, enrolled in the army, but

they remain to work for the war in some workshop, until they are discovered, while the non-anarchists want to cross the mountains to go to France, some of them recrossing the Spanish frontier in some other place to join Franco's forces. Of the two that came yesterday, one anarchist was arrested on the job, and the other in his house. The others are the twenty-six of today and the twenty-four of yesterday.

There is also a third category if deserter: they are the foreigners who have come to join the International Brigade who deserted, not for tiredness or cowardice, but because they are volunteers, and they have been months and months fighting at the front, but now they can't stand the authoritarian methods of their communist leaders any longer in their brigade, and the bloody acts toward them, hating them to death! At the meeting place of the CNT-FAI the various cities there came an ever greater number of communist volunteers of the International Brigades seeking help in hiding, after having escaped from their communist formations. Once enrolled in them, they serve as cannon fodder for the glory of the communist party. Among these communist-deserters of the International Brigade there were one German, two Frenchmen, and three English.

One Englishman told me of nine months on the front without a single day in the rear. And they had never been fooled by the anti-anarchist propaganda, by their leaders who kept them continuously isolated from any contact with the mass of the Spanish working class, in order to use them also as repressive elements for the counter-revolutionary aim of the Communist Party.

Of the two Frenchmen, one was sixteen years old and was at the front five months fighting in the Karl Marx Division. He has two other volunteer brothers in the other division, also communists; and the other Frenchman had four brothers, volunteers, all killed! And he had been wounded several times. And now they have been arrested and treated like criminals for wanting to return to their countries, after they had come as volunteers. This last misfortune has demonstrat-

the authentic workers of the ugt and of the p.s.u.c.

ed to them for good of all the criminal and counter-revolutionary role of this party, which, now they hate as a calamity for the working class “in general,” and for the Spanish in particular.

Among the first twenty-four “alpinists” that have arrived, there are sixteen of the UGT and the PSUC, communist, several without party affiliation, and three or four republicans. Among all of them they are carrying 900,000 *pesetas*; among them there wasn’t a single workingman.

Of the last twenty-six, the proportion of those of the UGT, and PSUC is a little less in comparison to those of the Esquerra and the Estat Catalá. Of the CNT-FAI there was nobody. This group, besides the enormous sum of money that they were carrying (one alone had a thousand *pesetas* in silver, without counting the bank bills), had found a very ingenious way to pass gold through the border. The cleverness consisted in molding the gold into buttons, pins, and other personal objects.

What is strange is that the PSUC and the UGT—helped by the republicans—with such... authentic working people like these forming the majority of their members, constitute the counter-revolutionary force that intends to crush the revolution, by imprisoning anarchists? Are these counterrevolutionary elements that form the Cheka, that penetrate all the organs of the State, that now constitute the most hateful enemy of the revolutionary Spanish people?

La “Modelo”

La Modelo, as the anarchists call this jail, for the frequent and prolonged residences that they were in it in the passing of the years, under the monarchy, as well as under this new republic of a new type, which preserves the same repressive method of the monarchy, although a little better organized as jailers, is the reason why the anarchists consider it a second home. In fact, they consider it also as their “university”, as it is in this that most anarchists in Barcelona have had their education. And except for the youngest among the five hundred

comrades who are here now it would be almost impossible to find any who has not been here already a number of times.

When before the 19th of July of 1936 two comrades met, after not seeing each other for some time, the first question which came up was generally the following:

“Where have you been?... In the ‘Modelo?’”

After the 19th of July, in the same circumstance, the question was: “From which front did you come?”

But now the anarchists begin to ask each other:

“Did you come from the front... or from the ‘Modelo?’”

This fact alone would be enough to demonstrate the progress of the counterrevolution.

The Modelo, at the time of its construction, must have constituted great progress in the jail system. The cells are of good dimension and well lit. They have a hole in the shape of a latrine, and water to irrigate it, and besides, the luxury of a wash-basin with running water. Those who have passed through jails in other countries—can they imagine what pleasure this constitutes? Water when wanted! What a joy!

But today they are in a pitiful condition. The latrine is not working, and the cells haven’t seen paint for at least a generation, when the first anarchists, our parents, had inhabited them... if they were anarchists. Therefore imagine the quantity of dirt that there is in them, if you consider also... that, built for one prisoner, they now lodge three: one who sleeps on the folding bed, and the other two sleep on the floor on a thin mattress. Therefore cleaning is almost impossible. In the thirty-six days I have already passed here I still haven’t been able to take off all my clothes in order to have a good sleep. And yet, lucky still that I have obtained a mattress without “cav-alry”, which, however, now they have already made their appearance, consists of: bedbugs, fleas, and lice. An invasion!

The Conquest of the Anarchists in the “Modelo”

But there is one thing that is preferable in this prison compared to others in other countries. It is the freedom of movement that we enjoy here. A liberty which is the result and the conquest of years of fights continuously conducted by our comrades inside here and in the streets.

At the beginning the prisoners were always kept in their cells, with very little time outside the cells to get fresh air. Then, with continuous protests, they succeeded in prolonging time in the open. And at last they won the right, by direct action, to remain outside the cells the whole day by putting fire to a part of the jail. And now the cells remain open from 7 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock in the evening; one can go from the first to the second gallery with the freedom of walking everywhere, hold meetings in the yard or in the gallery; with the freedom to have conversations, and even to give a lecture if you want. All this was won by the anarchists, in their years of struggle.

Naturally to allow the anarchists to enjoy so much freedom in jail makes the inquisitors of the Cheka furious, and more than once they have tried to restrict it, but until now they haven't succeeded.

In each of the galleries we have a committee in charge of solving all the conflicts that occur with the administration, and those of the POUM have theirs. In each gallery there are two guards, who are supposedly there to assure order, but who count for nothing, and they mix with us as if they were comrades. The real policemen are outside of our gallery, in the center, and these are of the communist PSUC. They have been those who tried to restrict our liberty, as real dogs of the Cheka... and failed.

What Happens to the Assassins of the Revolution

The Spanish character manifests itself quite clearly in its spontaneous and rapid actions. These men who are here inside, to a superficial observer, may seem discouraged, reduced to cowardice, tired of so much struggle and sacrifice in favor of the cause. They accuse themselves of having become cowards for the simple fact of being here in jail. But none of these accusations is true. There may be some of them who are somewhat tired and possessed of a great disillusion which paralyzes their energy somewhat, but they would suddenly explode irresistibly under the pressure of the cowardly acts on the part of the Cheka which they consider intolerable. And this may be the guarantee of the final triumph of the revolution, if the war is won.

The other day the indomitable spirit of revolt of these comrades manifested itself clearly when they responded immediately, and without calculating the consequences, perhaps tragically, to a provocation of the police. The comrades must remember the massacre of comrades committed by the counter-revolution in the region of Puigcerdà. The chief of this counter-revolution is called Samper. He is the right hand of Comorera, the communist leader. Samper, besides organizing the counter-revolution in the field, was also helping the fascists escape to France, with their capital, for aims easy to imagine. He is charged with the murder of five or six of our comrades. That is why he is so admired by the Cheka. This criminal had the effrontery of presenting himself at the gate of our gallery in a provocative manner, armed with a pistol, in spite of the fact that the regulations forbid the entry of outside armed policemen, when they don't come for some official function.

In front of our gate—the door of our gallery being open at that moment—he met our comrade Domingo, who did not know the

policeman. In an ironic tone he saluted him, and our comrade answered that he didn't accept greetings from a criminal. Then Samper made the gesture of wanting to pull out his gun, but various comrades who saw his gesture jumped on him, and beat him like hell under the very eyes of the other policemen, who didn't dare to intervene. They had to carry the provoker to the hospital. Immediately our two galleries met, and unanimously decided to support the act of Domingo, since the other comrades who beat up the provoker... could not be discovered.

Our Neighbors, the Fascists

In the case that some day, with the intention of slandering us, we would be accused of associating with fascists—the Catalan Cheka, in the style of the Russian Cheka, is capable of any infamy—we have to state that our association with the fascists, our neighbors in... dwelling, is not of our choice. What is voluntary is the association of the Cheka with the fascists, which manifests itself continuously in gestures of reciprocal solidarity, and reciprocal sympathy. That means that if the communist Cheka continues to dominate, not a single fascist will remain in jail, the Chekists filling up the empty space with anarchists. The numbers are those which speak.

They assure me that in May there were here a thousand fascists, today there remain only five hundred. Some of them have been transferred to another prison, but the majority have been freed. Just a few days ago the total of the prisoners was 1,496 and this night they are 1,375; 121 prisoners have been freed, while the anarchists have been increased by 20. Even yesterday, 40 fascists were freed, and only 5 anarchists, three of them only temporarily. Then at once 25 more anarchists came... as our guests. They are those of the Escolapios building occupied by the anarchists, and assaulted by more than a thousand policemen with various pieces of artillery, twenty armed cars, and all kinds of armaments, while in the Escolapios there were only twenty-five men and one girl. After this, can you doubt the heroism of the

Cheka and the assault guards? And it is for this counter-revolutionary infamy that I'm also here.

Impunity for the Fascists

The fascists who are here feel so safe under the dictatorship of the communist Cheka, that with impunity they can permit themselves all kind of provocations. One night, while the fascists' planes were bombarding Barcelona, the fascists in their cells intoned their hymns. And when Bilbao and Santander fell into the hands of Franco they were days of great jubilation and celebration. And the guards of the PSUC? They remained tranquil and obliging. But one day when we sang the International, the semi-official hymn of the Republic, those of Falange Español, priests and fascist monks, booed, shouted, and praised Franco. And the Cheka did not say a word. And on other occasions when some fascists were freed, they took leave from their comrades by making the Mussolini salute. And those of the PSUC always deaf, and then shaking hands and saying goodby to the fascists as if they were comrades.

Another afternoon, while an officer of the PSUC was in service, who had been an element of the organizations of the right in Lérida, our comrades were singing in the yard the hymn: "The Barricades," this officer ordered them to stop singing, and the fascists started to shout and whistle: "Hurray Franco!" The tolerated provocation was so manifestly clear, that our two galleries rushed to the gates, while the fascists rushed to theirs, causing a hell of an uproar the fascists hurrahing also the communist PSUC. Among brothers they support each other.

And while the counterrevolutionaries and fascists support each other on an infinity of occasions, and all against the anarchists, the anarchists and those of the POUM support the people in the street who are enduring hunger, due to the politics of sabotage of the government against the collectives of the peasants, and also due to the politics of the communists councilor Comorera, called the "King

impunity for the fascists

of the Potato" because the potatoes are rotting in the fields, and Co-morera stops them from being transported to the city just to sabotage the collectives. Meanwhile bread is lacking, and the workers' families go crazy trying to find something to eat. And these are the men the counterrevolution put in jail.

Uncontrolled Criminal Folly

The drunkards of power must enjoy a delirium of satisfaction to be able to say:

"The life of this man belongs to me. I can let him go free or keep him in jail; allow him to live or suppress him; arrest him when I want, in the street, on the job, or snatch him from his bed and throw him in a dismal cell, humiliate him, torture, insult him while he can't answer violence with violence, suffering with suffering. Ah! what rapture! And I could even liquidate him, and nobody would dare to ask me to account for my action. Nothing could surpass the joy of such power!"

And if you had that our dictator will not feel disturbed by any moral scruples, by any feeling of pity toward his victims; that no feeling of humanity, justice, gratitude, honesty, decency will upset him, because they are dead in his being, and for that reason they will not put any brake to his lust for persecution and suppression, then you will understand still better the frenzy of pleasure that the dictator feels in possessing the power to do everything with impunity.

Something of the kind happens today to our Chekists in Spain, because he knows that he can commit an infinity of dirty tricks and crimes with impunity against his anarchist opponents, and they can't always answer him because they are paralyzed by the idea that if they revolt they may be accused of sabotaging the war against fascism. And in this way the scoundrels of Chekists take advantage to hit the anarchists as much as they can in order to increase their power.

Today two of our comrades went free. They passed a month here in jail. In going out one of the policemen asked him if he was glad to go out.

“I would like to know why you have kept me in jail a month,” answered one of the comrades.

“Before you were the strong, and now we are,” the pig answered him. The comrade, so as not to go back to the cell again, could not answer him.

“But...son of a great *p...*! When we were strong, all the fascists, as well as the canailles like you were freely circulating, while in jail were only the fascists had revolted to impose on us their dictatorship, while you use force to free the fascists and put in jail the antifascists.”

The Great Services that the Cheka Renders to the Revolution

When after three weeks they took us from the “Lechera” to bring us here to the “Modelo” jail, they put us in an uncovered wagon, and with six *Guardias de Asalto* as escort, we crossed the city at full speed. But before arriving we stopped four twenty-four hours in the Palace of Justice, in a room that beat anything in dirt. We slept on the floor as usual. With the prisoners that we found there, and others that came afterwards, we reached the number of twenty-seven, and we found enough room to lie down. This didn’t at all worry our Chekists, and not even the good judges of this “democratic” republic of the Popular Front. There they brought also a pregnant woman in her 8th month for “insult to a guard”, which today constitutes a great crime. The woman was going with a large basket to buy food for her children at home. And being in a hurry, not to leave the children too long alone, she tried to cross the street running. But she found herself in front of the representative of “order” who was doing his duty mounted on a beautiful horse, full of pride. The criminal woman almost had the boldness of passing under the belly of the horse, in that way putting in danger the precious life of the proud rider. Well, without even descending from the horse, the biped who mounted it felt very insulted, because the criminal woman had, besides, the audacity of calling the pig, “animal”, as if the pregnant woman had the right of endangering

the great services that the cheka renders to the revolution

him and his horse. He arrested her so that she would learn the value of a policeman when the Cheka rules.

Another criminal that was arrested was Pedro, an acrobat. (We describe these facts so that the world may learn about the great services the communist Cheka renders for the safety of the Republic, and of the revolution.) Pedro, the acrobat, was standing in the Paralelo. What was he doing, this dangerous subject? He was looking at the girls. This still the Republic of a new type could tolerate, if the girl that Pedro, the acrobat, was looking were any girl. But when he looked in the eyes of the girl who was going arm in arm with a policeman, this constituted a great danger for the regime, a crime of high treason! And the policeman of the insulted girl, by the leer of Pedro, just did his duty in grabbing Pedro, the acrobat, and bringing him to jail; now classified as Pedro, the enemy of the regime. And here he is, already held twenty-three days, for the safety of all.

And Juan has six wounds. A fist could enter the one he has in his breast. The Moors did that to him when he went to Madrid with Durruti, he says. But this must be a lie, since everybody knows that only the communists are those who saved Madrid from the fascists... according to all the communist press. Therefore, Juan lies when he says that he, also, with Durruti, and his anarchist column were in Madrid to fight the fascists hordes and stop them... with their skins.

But Juan is not here in, jail for that. His crime is much more serious. He is here for having the effrontery of saying to the heroic policemen, who in the accomplishment of their patriotic duty were beating the hell out of some citizen, that they would do better to demonstrate their heroism at the front. Can you imagine such effrontery? As if the Cheka was created to make war on fascists, when everybody knows that the war is against the anarchists!

Now there is nothing that spoils more the good humor of the police and makes it furious, than to tell them to go to the front where bullets flash around, when one feels so well in the rear. Therefore nobody will find it unjust if the policemen grab and throw in jail anyone

who is so ill-bred as to tell them that their tremendous heroism could be better employed where the bullets fall like hail. Let the cowards of the CNT and FAI go to the front, they will take care to shoot them in case they return alive. And so Juan was justly brought to jail, and likewise his wife, for the crime of associating with such a bad subject. And Juan will stay in jail (his wife was released after seventeen days) until the offended honor of the Cheka is vindicated; because Juan had committed another crime besides. When the policemen asked him if he had children, the bandit answered:

“Yes, I have one who is three years old, and already shouts: ‘Hurray for the FAI!’” And this, for the Cheka, constitutes the greatest of crimes. And at the moment that I am writing this I still don’t know if the delinquent child has already been arrested or not, as to leave him free he may continue to shout: “Hurray for the FAI!” and this would constitute a frightening danger for the survival of the lovely Republic... of a new democratic totalitarian type, that the Cheka heroically protects, in that way earning the gratitude of the proletarians of the world.

The House that is Never Lacking to the Anarchists

This is the “Modelo” prison. Since the day that it was built about forty years ago, I think, the anarchists find its door always open, ready to receive them; except for a brief pause beginning from the 19th of July, 1936. Today, of the 1,500 prisoners, those of the CNT-FAI are the most numerous tenants, surpassing even the number of fascists. We are five hundred and our total is increasing continuously, while that of the fascists is decreasing. The pigs of the Cheka are so occupied in persecuting the anarchists, that they have very little time left to discover underground fascists. Besides it has too many fascists in its ranks to be able to do that. It would be simply mindlessness to ask that the fascists should be looking to catch... themselves.

We have just to look at what kind of people continuously join the police force to understand that the “fifth column” has found there its best field of action; as we have to see what reactionary, and philofascist elements enter into the communist PSUC, to occupy managing positions in an infinity of places, in order to understand that the counterrevolution had to spring out mainly from this communist party.

When we arrived at the “Modelo” it was already night. Without any difficulty its doors were opened to let us enter. If they would also open so easily to let us out...

Once inside, the first visit was to register us. After taking our names for the first time, they took our fingerprints. I say the first time, because in the next three days they took them six times, beating the record of all international police, except, perhaps, the police of the countries of the so-called communist “democracy”; our Cheka being an imitation of the Cheka of papa Stalin.

The second stop we made in the edifice was where they cleaned our pockets of everything not allowed us. There I had the time to throw a look at the construction of the jail, which has six galleries, which combining at the center form a kind of star. The total of the cells is six hundred for six hundred prisoners. But due to the flourishing activity of the Cheka, as we already mentioned, we are 1,500.

Once the ceremonies ended, we had to pass the night in a great hall; but soon came a committee that represented our comrades—themselves prisoners, naturally—to see if among us there was somebody of the CNT-FAI, who are never missing. Once the presentation is made, we pass immediately to the “anarchist city”, in which are included those of the POUM, due to their revolutionary behavior during the May days; many of them coming to fight at the side of the anarchists, where they found protection from the attacks of the communists, who also wanted their elimination. So in the two entire galleries that form the “anarchist city” we are four hundred, fifty of the POUM, while a hundred other members of the CNT are scattered in other galleries for lack of room in our two. And here we

shall continue our life behind the bars of the communist-bourgeois counterrevolution.

The Fascists-Priests, Monks Depart, the Anarchists Remain

It is really so. The fascists and priest-fascists continue to be liberated, while the anarchists continue to increase. Yesterday three priests were freed from one gallery, and I don't know how many fascists from the others. And today two more priests were freed, one of them condemned to twenty years, and half a dozen anarchists came in. Ten days ago the total of the imprisoned was down to 1,353: a week ago 1,490; two days ago 1,365, and yesterday it went down to 1,353. In ten days the number of fascist priests monks, fascists and thieves went down more than 150, and ours went up 25... It is the kingdom of Burrillo, the counter-revolutionary instrument of the PSUC, communist, bourgeoisie and Cheka. Isn't it clear where the counterrevolution is hiding?

Do you want more facts that show the criminality of this bourgeois-communist Cheka? A French comrade was arrested, and the Cheka pretended that he was Spanish. He hadn't committed any "crime" other than the one of belonging to the CNT. His wife was arrested in her room because they wanted to force her to testify against her comrade. She refused, naturally. They brought her to the commissariat, forcing her to abandon the house during a whole day, leaving alone a baby of two months. When the mother was freed during the night she found the baby desperately crying.

Another comrade is already in jail several weeks because her companion didn't report for military service, and she doesn't know where he is. The same thing happened to another comrade. She was brought to the Commissariat and then put in a cell where there is no light, with her two daughters, one of two years and the other of two months. Here they kept her for four days. Meanwhile they brought to the jail the daughter of the attorney Cuevas, who at the beginning

the fascists priests, monks depart, the anarchists remain

of the revolution had to flee because he was a fascist, the same as his daughter. She was arrested at the border while she was trying to run away with her two maids. She was taken to the Commissariat and put in the same cell as our comrade. She was visited by the same secretary of Burillo, who showed her all kind of attentions, telling her not to get alarmed because soon she would be freed. And she was. The second day she gained her freedom, our comrade with her two daughters remained in the cell, while in the cell nearby was imprisoned the famous lawyer Eduardo Barriobero, of the Federal Republican Party, simply for being the defender of the comrades of the CNT, and for having gone to the Commissariat to request the freedom of the social prisoners, like many other times he had requested the freedom of the anarchists under the monarchy, which also incarcerated him. And now he is also here in the “Modelo”.

The “Governmental” Prisoner

What Spanish prisoner doesn’t know the tragedy of this word “governmental”? This means that at the caprice of the police they throw you in a cell, without being charged of any crime; keeping you in jail three, six, months, or one year, and more, and when they have freed you, they arrest you again when it pleases the police, repeating in this way for you and your family, the same *via crucis*. There is not one Spanish comrade, if active in the past for a number of years, who did not pass some of them in jail as “governmental”. The monarchy practiced it against all revolutionary elements that disturbed it, and the socialist-bourgeois republic continues to apply it against the anarchists. And now in the “Popular Republic” the Cheka continues the system of the monarchy with a major dose of sectarianism.

At the beginning I was under accusation; now I am “governmental”. Which means that before I was detained for “public disorder”, and now that the judge having signed my release for lack of culpability, inside I was, and inside I remain. It is a nice trick, no? If before I was in jail as “imprisoned”, now I remain in jail as “retained”.

My situation didn't change at all. As freed from all culpability, inside I was, and inside I remain. In fact, as "retained" my situation has really gotten worse. Because now I will be kept in jail until the chief of the pigs pleases to keep me.

All the "governmental" prisoners find themselves in this incertitude by now. We are about a hundred and fifty. All of us "governmental" prisoners are told that we have our freedom signed by the judge, but half the instrument of the communist party, Burrillo, who is the boss of justice, refuses to free us. And here, as the chief of police, he is the government.

The murmur that soon Burillo will leave his post runs like a breath of hope. It is even said that he has already given up his position in order to accept a higher one in the army. Poor army! And the prisoners ask themselves: will the new chief of police be better or worse? Everybody is convinced that no one can be worse than Burillo.

Under his command numberless detentions, assaults to workers unions, kidnappings, assassinatations have been made. Even yesterday there was an invasion on a CNT union, and the closing of the food syndicate. What can the new chief bring that is worse than this to the service of the counter-revolution?

The Foreigners

The situation of these comrades is still more desperate. There are about a hundred, of many nationalities, but mainly French, Italians, and Germans, almost all "governmentals". Hanging over them there is surely expulsion, the expulsion that the Cheka cannot carry out, because France refuses to receive any more expelled from Spain, and no other country is disposed to receive them. And these comrades have in front of them the prospective of remaining in jail until the end of the conflict, while the greater part of them have been here already a number of months. There are already two hundred expelled, but it is already a month that none have been carried out, precisely because of the refusal of France to accept them.

the foreigners

The form of expulsion is characteristic of the Cheka. Toward 9 o'clock at night they would come to notify those who would be expelled to get ready to depart, but it was only at 6 o'clock in the morning that they would be loaded on trucks to be taken to the border. They were not allowed to notify either family, nor comrades, nor anybody. They were even forbidden to take their things, and most of them were delivered to the French police without any clothes, money, or documentation. And naturally in France they ended up in prison. In this way they were getting out of one jail and entering in another one. And it is to be kept in mind that 90 per cent of these foreigners came here as volunteers to fight against fascism in the International Brigade. In this way once engaged in the communist International Brigades they had only one choice: either to end in a grave or in prison. And the worst of it is that some of them are anarchists, who not knowing that the International Brigade were communists, ended up in them and after months on the front, with many of them killed, they realized that they were volunteers-prisoners, ending up in this jail because they wanted to depart. This is the gratitude that communism has for these idealistic men, who once captured by the communists are considered only to be cannon-fodder to be sacrificed for the glory of communism. Can you imagine a greater ignominy than this communist-socialist bourgeois republic?

The Hand that Murdered the Russian Revolution Shows Up

It is the hand of Stalin. What is he doing in Spain? There is no doubt about it. He comes to repeat the murder of the revolution. But this can't be said in Spain. And the murderer clothes himself in anonymity. Because he isn't satisfied with stabbing the revolution in the back; he also wants to silence it. It must be hindered, stopped from asking for help, so that it can be stabbed more easily, and then ask for Judas' money. And what will the price of treason be?

The Attack against the Escolapios

How did the police at the command of Burrillo assault the Escolapios? We'll relate it briefly. The Escolapios is an old convent occupied by the anarchists after the 19th of July. It was serving as the place for various locals of unions, and in it was established a library among the best in Spain. Open to everybody.

This enormous building was very much desired by the counterrevolutionaries, but our organizations did not want to give it up, and therefore the counterrevolution decided to occupy it by force. The 20th of September, around 2:30 in the morning, policemen showed up at the door of the Escolapios. They asked the comrades at the door to let them in, in order to make a search. The porter told them that at night the secretaries were not present, therefore they should come during the day. Without another word, the policemen discharged their pistols against the door. It was the provocation of the counterrevolution, all planned.

What they wanted was an armed conflict in order to exterminate the comrades inside, twenty-five in all, and a woman. They were sleeping, and awakened by the shooting, they realized immediately that they were assaulted.

The roofs of the houses nearby were full of Guardias de Asalto with all kind of armaments, as if they were going to the conquest of a fortress. It is calculated that there were about 3,000 assault guards and policemen with many machine guns, four or five pieces of artillery, and about twenty armed cars. The machine guns followed the shooting of the pistols, although from the inside nobody had fired a shot, having understood immediately that they would be massacred if they did. And what could they do, twenty-six people, practically unarmed, against 3,000 policemen with assets of war?

At 9:30 five cannon shot were fired against the Escolapios. At 1:00 in the afternoon, still without firing a shot, the comrades, with the promise of the police that after being interrogated they would be

the attack against the Escolapios

let free, came out voluntarily. But instead of being released they passed one month in the pits of the Jefatura without any contact with the outside. And now they are brought here and accused of espionage and other treason. Just like in the trials that Stalin knew to stage so well. Let anyone make their commentaries. And in front of the Escolapios is where I was arrested.

A Torture Chamber in the Cheka

Just as the Holy Inquisition of the Church had its instruments of torture against the heretics, the Inquisition of the communist church also has its methods of torture. These are as barbarous and vile as the others. The version that follows it is truthful in every detail because it has been told me more than once by the victim, although I am asked not to give the name of the comrade in order to spare him more torture.

The comrade, fifty-three years of age, is an old Italian revolutionary syndicalist, who for his ideas and struggles has passed many years in the jails of various countries. And it was thanks to this that he was well fortified against many kinds of buffering. And to his indomitable will-power it is to be attributed the fact that his reason has not been broken under the menace of death by the Cheka. This old comrade, at the start of the revolution, rushed to Spain to enlist as a volunteer in the militia. As a volunteer he remained many months on the Aragon front, and only when the national army was formed, and due to his age, he gave the gun to more young hands, and returned to the rear to continue the struggle in the collectives.

Three months ago he was arrested when he was passing in front of the Carlos Marx headquarters, where he was arrested and taken inside. The communist who arrested him left him below, watched by another communist, while the first went above to talk to some Italian communists. And it can be seen that between them they plotted what they wanted to do with him. After half an hour they brought him to the commissariat of the Cheka of the port, which is in Via Durruti. For documents our comrade had: a passport given

to him by the Spanish authorities; a certificate of the army; the book of the CNT, and other perfectly legal documents. To demonstrate his antifascist quality he had more documents than needed.

From 2:30, when he arrived at the commissariat, until 10:20, the police occupied itself in investigating the veracity of his documents. By 10:20 they must have been convinced without any doubt that his documents were authentic.

But this was not convenient to the Cheka. In their minds surely they had concocted a diabolic plan, which the authenticity of the documents of our comrade was bankrupting. Therefore they decided to make him confess that his documents were false. Why? Because he is an anarchist, an enemy of their dictatorship.

At 2:30 they brought him into the cellar of another Commissariat of Barcelona, by now all under of their Cheka control, directly or through their associates, and a little later on they brought him back to the Commissariat of the Port. There they made him wait in a room, where a moment later they brought an individual, who by the persistence that he showed in sleeping, our comrade suspected immediately that he was a false prisoner. A few minutes later came in two individuals who sat in front of our comrade, and without trying to hide it, one made the gesture to the other that they were going to hit him. Our comrade set them up as two "straw men" of the Cheka, who had come as silent witnesses of what will occur, to later testify that our comrade had "confessed". The gesture that the one did in order that our comrade should see it was part of their plan to demoralize him in order to help in the "confession". When everything was disposed, the commissary and other policemen made our comrade enter in the next room, where the two "straw men" could hear all what was said there. And what happened was this.

In the room where they had entered there was a semi-circular hole more than one meter high, and about a meter and a half (five feet) wide. This hole was an opening over the sewer of the city, the water at that point being about six feet deep. And now the Cheka

the "governmental" prisoner

started its abominable job.

The seven or eight policemen had their pistols out, one of them being dressed like an executioner, undoubtedly to impress our comrade more, the disposition of the room and the attitude of the policemen being calculated to provoke terror. And the interrogation started.

Commisar: (showing him an issue of the Vanguard with articles marked in blue pencil) What do these signs mean?"

Comrade: "I don't know."

Commisar: "This newspaper wrapped your photographic machine." (A device they had taken away from him at the Carlos Marx quarter, with negatives of fields and orchards, with peasants of the collective working, due to the fact that our comrade was making a study of the collectives, specially of those of the Llobregat.)

Comrade: "You put the newspaper there, not me."

Commisar: "Where did you obtain the passport?"

Comrade: "You saw it. Why do you I ask me?"

Commisar: (while the policemen threaten the comrade with the pistols) "This passport is false! Confess that it is false!"

Comrade: "You are crazy! It is authentic, like all my other documents. You are the false ones!"

Commisar: "You will confess that it is false! Like all the other documents. We give you five minutes to confess. And if you don't do it we kill you and we'll throw you into the sewer."

Comrade: "You are crazy! I can't confess to what is false!"

Various Policemen: (simultaneously, while with the pistols they push him against the wall) "Confess! Confess!"

Comrade: "No! (shouting) Ah! now I understand! It is here you murdered Berneri!"

Commisar: "Confess that your documents are false. Confess that you are a fascist... otherwise..."

Comrade: "Assassins! You are the fascists! You are the assassins! If you have murdered Berneri, you can murder me too! But remem-

ber that you are murdering a revolutionary!"

Policeman: (covering his mouth) "Me cago en God!"

Another Policeman: (grabbing him by the throat and pulling him toward the sewer to point where with a little push he would fall into the water) "The five minutes are passed. Now I will finish you!" (pointing the pistol at his head)

Commisar: "Leave him alone. I still want to ask him something else."

Policeman: "No! This coward has to disappear immediately. We have already spoken too much!" (the Commissar grabs the prisoner and pulls him a little away from the sewer.)

Commisar: (showing him a photograph of a man) "Do you know him?"

Comrade: "I have never seen him."

Commisar: "He his the chief of the O.V.R.A." (the Italian Cheka)

Comrade: "Well? What has he to do with me?"

Commisar: "Confess that you are a fascist and that this is your chief."

Comrade: "This will be your chief, if it is true that he is the chief of the O.V.R.A. Because his method of terror and yours are the same." (Shouting at him louder and louder) "I am an old revolutionary! I am fifty-three years old! I have come here voluntarily, and I have passed five months in the trenches fighting against the fascists!"

Commisar: (ever more threatening) "You must confess that your documents are false and that you are a fascist!"

Comrade: "You! You are the fascists! You are assassins! You are cowards! If Mussolini would see you he would give you a decoration!"— (The policemen take off the security from the pistols and points it at his head, while another one with the pistol was hitting him on the nose, and still another one was pushing him against his belly, pressing him ever more against the wall to the point of suffocating).

A Policeman: (showing him a blank sheet, and a pencil) "Sign this paper."

Comrade: "I will sign no paper if I don't know what it says."

Commisar: "If you sign that you are a fascist, and that your docu-

the "governmental" prisoner

ments are false, you will only be expelled; and if you don't sign we will kill you and we throw you into the sewer."

Comrade: (hitting the sheet with his fist and throwing it to the ground) "You can kill me, if you want, but I'll die like I am. But remember that you assassinate a revolutionary, an antifascist and a militia man."

The scene lasted one hour. One hour of physical and moral torture! How many would have had the fortitude to resist signing a false confession, which in this case would have signified dishonor and death! Our comrade had it, and to it without a doubt he owes his life. They would have made him disappear afterwards, in case of a scandal, and didn't the Cheka have a "confession: signed to demonstrate that the one "liquidated" was a fascist who was passing as an anarchist?

When they saw that their criminal plan had failed, they returned to the other room where the two silent "witnesses" and the "other", as if nothing had passed, continued, obstinately, to pretend to sleep. Half an hour later the Commissar made our comrade enter again in the torture room, and he expected a repetition of the previous scene, with a tragic ending. But what a surprise when he noticed the magic transformation that had happened in the room. They had put there two small beds of iron, and a writing-desk while the tone of the Commissar had changed entirely, and the hole had disappeared.

Commissar: "If what you have said is the truth, tomorrow I will free you. Now you can sleep in one of these beds. The door of this room as well as the one to the street are open. But don't run away, eh?"

Comrade: "I have no reason to run away. You must free me."

The Commissar went away, leaving the door of the room open, as well as the one to the street. A trap!... The Commissar, as well as the policeman, disappeared... A moment later they turned out the lights, and our comrade remained alone, as all the policemen seemed to have departed with the Commissar. And the door opened... the dark... and the street in view... What a temptation... after what he

went through.

If few could have resisted the torture, how many would have resisted the desire to run?... And where were the pigs hiding with their guns ready to apply to him the famous ley de fuga? A law very practical to eliminate anarchists?

Our comrade, guessing the idiotic trick, naturally remained peacefully in bed, but with his eyes wide open, ready to scream in case of attempted murder by the police. But when the day came, the commissar, instead of freeing him as he had promised, he sent him to the Cheka of Porta del Angel where they kept him two days. Then to this jail, our Modelo, where he is already more than one hundred days, without any accusation on the part of the judge. He is here at the disposition of the communist Cheka. Until when?

The Speeches of the Executioners

They are the speeches of the dictators or of those who aim to be, against those who oppose them. For every difference of opinion, for every opposition, for every resistance to their folly for power, they menace us with extermination. Hitler was menacing to make the heads of his opponents roll in the dust; Mussolini, by walking over their bodies; Stalin, by liquidating them. And the tragedy is that they succeeded in putting into operation their menaces, filling up the cemeteries with corpses. The lunatics! The aspiring dictators of Spain also threaten us with extermination. Sometimes with veiled threats, other times directly. The sinister communist Comorera, in his speech in Valencia, said that for a drop of his precious blood, he would make run rivers of blood of the adversaries of the dictatorship of his party. And this scoundrel forgets that in the days of May he was prisoner in the hands of the anarchists, and these have been so generous—or stupid?—that they didn't even touch a hair of his. Another skunk, Prieto, in another speech threatened also, with all his thunderbolts, the anarchists, stating the creation of a formidable army, not in the front, but in the rear-guard, to pursue and kill anti-fascists. A real army of

the speeches of the executioners

parasites, saboteurs, and assassins of the struggle against Franco.

And now comes the speech of the minister of the government of Madrid, giving notice of the escape of the government of Valencia to Barcelona, in order to be nearer to the border of France, for fear of the offensive that is rumored the fascists are preparing on the Teruel front. And in order to cover the cowardice of the socialist-communist-bourgeois cabinet, the ministers on whom our destiny in part depends depends—we, the prisoners—threaten to raise the gallows in the public places, in the style of Franco, to hang all the opponents of the government of defeat.

“Obedience!” thunders the minister. And he adds: “It is not enough to obey! It is necessary, also, to keep silent. And for those that don’t want to obey, nor keep silent, we will raise the gallows and hang them!”

They can’t make any other speeches, the hangmen who elect themselves to rule us. What is being prepared with these continued threats of death? Ah! what a great desire the Cheka must have to find a pretext, any pretext, to liquidate a number of prisoners that disturb them so much with their denunciations of the treasons and crimes that the Cheka is perpetrating.

They are two days that Comorera has prepared an attack on... himself. Are they seeking some victims to sacrifice to their lust for power? The revolution today lives between the gallows or the picket of execution. The existence of so many is an uncomfortable testimony on the part of so many sincere witnesses to their conscience of mercenaries of capitalism and Moscow communism. The revolutionaries, and the social prisoners, are a reproach to their treason. They have to choke this reproach by terrorizing it with continuous menaces of death. Because despite that here the revolution is in chains, it still lives in these prisoners, who will not bend, nor will they renounce to realize the revolutionary mission they have assigned to themselves.

The Exaltation of Power

We are living once more in a period of intense exaltation of authority. The power of the State, police power, had been overthrown the 19th of July, by the anarchists, at least in Cataluña. Today the Chekist is raising this power of the State again to the throne, as the defenders of law and order—that the police doesn't respect—and even of property accumulated by exploiting the masses; defending it against those “rebels” who want the revolution, which would end this exploitation.

Meanwhile we continue in jail. In four days, only two of us went out free. How many new ones came? I don't know. I only know that yesterday and today in the first and second floor of my gallery, they have been forced to increase by a fourth the distribution of the ration for the newly arrived. This we know positively, because among the gains that the anarchists have succeeded in imposing in this jail, is that of being themselves the cooks for the anarchist city. That means that in order to be sure that nobody will rob of a part of the food that is due us, the administration has been forced to deliver to our comrades the right weight of food to which we are entitled for each person. And in this way, at least, we don't go hungry, because our comrades cook and distribute our food. But the “Modelo” is becoming ever more the house of the authentic revolutionaries. As it was at the time of the monarchy, so it is in the... Popular Republic.

Today they have freed again a good number of fascists, among them, priests. How lucky are the fascists under the reign of the Cheka of the government of the Popular Front.

Meanwhile for us the last news is that the twenty-five comrades, and the woman comrade, prisoners of the Escolapios, will appear at the special military Tribunal, accused of espionage and treason. Does this mean that, in Spain, too, there will begin to function—like in Russia—the platoons of Soviet-style “liquidation”, of the Cheka?

All you proletarians of the world! All free men and women listen to our voices of alarm against those who are assassinating the Spanish social revolution, for which the working masses have shed and are still shedding so much blood!

Sad Hours in the Cells

There is a profound sadness in these men who are enclosed here. Besides the deprivation of liberty, their more intense sadness is the immobility, the paralysis of their will to act; they who in their majority have been those that in the first hour have faced the fascist beast. And now they are here, impotent, immobilized, while the same beast continuously advances on the various fronts, which they had helped to stop. The liberty that these revolutionaries ask for is not for themselves alone, but that freedom to continue to fight and offer their blood, and perhaps their lives, for the emancipation of this unhappy humanity.

In the last few days there is a great agitation among the social prisoners. Outside the secret campaign (which the Cheka can't suppress) for the liberation of the prisoners, and against the criminal activity of the government, and of the counter-revolution which is becoming each day more powerful. Signs of popular revolt announce themselves for the near future, if these men here are not released. In hearing these symptoms of torment of the revolutionary masses betrayed, the mouthpieces of the government speak of an amnesty in the near future. An amnesty for these revolutionists who are those who helped in the beginning to stop the fascists? Ridiculous! What can the counter-revolution forgive the revolution? We feel indignant in hearing that the executioners want to "forgive" the victims. They have some cynicism, these bandits in power! Even the PSUC, this collection of saboteurs of the revolution, want to "forgive" us. To forgive us who are only guilty of combatting their treason against the desires of the exploited class?

Those “Indomitable” of the F.A.I.

While on the front great battles are going on among those that want to be free and those who want to make us slaves again; while in the rear-guard the revolution and counter-revolution prepare their weapons in a conflict in which, up to now, the counter-revolution in a coalition formed by communists, socialists, and bourgeois has had the advantage against anarchists, the social prisoner tortures himself in what to him looks like a slow death.

Luckily this passivity is only apparent. Under the surface, in the darkness, there is an intense, feverish activity in an attempt to gain freedom. While the Chekists with their pistols guard to hinder the prisoners to escape from their claws, the men of the FAI pierce the belly of the earth underneath these walls that keep us prisoners. The men of the FAI want to be free! Will they be? Liberty has to be won, it is said, and therefore... to work for it!

A group of comrades meet in one of the cells in the main floor. They have decided to escape. How? Dig a tunnel under the wall of the *Modelo* until we reach the sewer of the city in the middle of the street outside, and then... Free! Their love of freedom makes them start the work immediately. In the cell number 114 of the second gallery they dig a hole in the cement floor, from which, in an incline, they reach the basement. From there starts the slow, difficult work of digging a tunnel that will pass under the wall. And it is necessary to reach the depth of 23 feet, because at that depth arrives the cement of the wall. Once past the first wall they meet with an enormous difficulty. A great block of granite bars their way. To pierce it is impossible, and they are forced to dig many feet around it to reach their goal.

Day after day, working like the damned, the men of the FAI, advance inch by inch in the narrow gallery toward the dreamed-of liberty! And so pass the days, pass the weeks, and these heroes continue to pierce the belly of the earth under the continuous fear of being discovered. When they have already pierced almost 85 feet the

those "indomitable" of the f.a.i.

work becomes ever more painful, torturing. But they continue to dig, totally naked, for the sweat that comes from their bodies. They know that each inch of dirt they dig brings them nearer to the coveted liberty, and they don't stop in their work except when they would not be able to justify their absence. And while they continue in their work, on the walls of the tunnel they write the manifestation of their faith and of their hopes. On one side they write: "A group of unconquered of the FAI." And on the other side: "The street of liberty!"

The 13th of November, the tunnel was finished. They had dug 120 feet in six weeks. On this day, there had remained only the inch of the cement of the sewer to break, which at the moment of escape a blow of an hammer would have broken... And then liberty!

To escape immediately? Escape alone?... They decided that they would not go alone. They had sweated, and risked too much, to be the only beneficiary of their: *Calle de la Libertad!*

They want the other comrades, the greatest number possible, like themselves here enclosed, to depart with them by the road of freedom. Therefore they will wait another day before escaping, in order to have the time to communicate to the others the happy news.

"Tomorrow, free!" the men of the FAI say to themselves, in being closed in their cells one more night...

Free?... Luck will be once more on the side of the Cheka, which that night, at 10 o'clock, in a casual search discovered the tunnel, and they put in the special cell of punishment the three comrades of cell 114, likewise the comrades of the four cells nearby, supposedly for helping them in the digging. This while the five hundred comrades of the two galleries forming the "Anarchist City"- were sleeping peacefully, and those who were in on the secret... were dreaming...

Revolt in the "Modelo"

In the morning the social prisoners were surprised that at the usual hour their cells were not opened. They waited a moment, then they called the guards. Nobody answered. 9 o'clock arrived, the hour

in which the two galleries usually started their visits with the families, and the cells were remained closed. Doubt began to enter in the minds of those who “knew”. Has the Cheka perhaps discovered the tunnel?... Their spirits began to get excited, and in a moment deafening shouts began to come out of all the cells. And the doors remained closed. Then it became a pandemonium!

In the cells the prisoners got hold of anything that could serve as a weapon. In some they broke the iron beds and with them they started to hit the doors in order to break them, and in some they succeeded, and the comrades of these cells opened others. Meanwhile the Cheka in the inside of the building started shooting with machine guns through the two galleries in order to frighten the comrades, succeeding only in exciting them even more. The revolt was looking serious.

While this was happening inside, outside hundreds of the women of comrades who had come to visit their men, had found a great concentration of policemen in the street, and the door of the “Modelo” closed... in hearing the machine guns shooting they began to shout and protest, thinking that the police were shooting their husbands, brothers, sons, fathers. And so the revolt was spreading in the street. This must have intimidated the Cheka, because on the inside they began immediately to pacify the prisoners by opening their cells, and announcing to them that the comrades put in the punishment cells, except for the three in the cell where the tunnel started, would be let out, and so they did. Then the two galleries met in the yard, and they determined to demand the release of the three comrades of cell 114, also, otherwise they would set fire to the prison. The Cheka was forced to bend. And so the situation became calm.

Cannon Fodder for the Glory of the Communist Party

At last they take me out of the “Modelo”. But it is still not to be freed. It is to take me to the Córcega street, which like its sister of Calle del Angel has a bad reputation, that of being a den of torturers,

robbers, and assassins. They deserve the reputation. There, a good number of comrades have been tortured and murdered. Others, after being brought to that place, have disappeared without leaving a trace. Just the idea of being conducted to the Calle Córcega gives shivers to the prisoners. Nobody feels assured, knowing that he will be in the hands of assassins who operate with the most complete impunity, since they operate above all laws and above all justice. And it is for that reason that when a comrade is brought to that slaughterhouse, that immediately a tragic rumor springs up: "Now they are going to picar him," they say. That means "disembowel." And after some time, if a comrade returns to the "Modelo: or is freed, he is congratulated for his good fortune.

But I went to the Calle Córcega without fear. Two days before I got a surprise visit. A representative of our government came to see me at the "Modelo", and informed me that at the consulate they were working to get me out of jail, in spite of the fact that I was not allowed to come to Spain. And why was I there? To do what? I had to improvise an innocent excuse, like many other Americans must have done, that I came to Spain because I loved agrarians, communes, which is a fact, and when I came to Paris some one in a cab told me that in Spain they had created many communes, which seemed to be functioning very well. And if I wanted to see them it would be very cheap for me to live there, as in the black market in Paris I could get so many *pesetas* for a dollar to live well two or three days. And so I came, and after a few days I was arrested here in Barcelona accidentally. After I wrote this down at the request of the consul, he told me, laughing: "I don't believe a word of what you write here, but I will mail it just the same to Washington."

But he didn't tell me the whole story, which is that a few days before he heard that the famous anarchist Emma Goldman, deported from the USA in 1920, and sent to Russia, happened to be in Barcelona at the moment, and he, I imagine, got the curiosity to meet her. And so he contacted our comrades at the headquarters of the CNT-FAI, among them Such and Abe Bluestein in the foreigner

section, and invited her to dinner. She accepted, and the comrades told her to ask the Vice Consul to get me out of jail. Which he did, after sending the secretary to interview me in jail. But of all this the Vice Consul didn't tell me a word and I only learned of it afterwards when back in the States.

In the Calle Córcega the first two prisoners I met were from the Garibaldi Battalion. They had been in prison about a month, because after coming as volunteers from Paris where they lived with their families, and having been at the front ten months, they wanted now to return to France, and they wouldn't let them go home. Those skunks, their communist leaders, they knew how rotten they had treated them in their Garibaldi Battalion, and they feared the bad publicity they would make against them if they let them leave Spain alive. So they were kept as prisoners, since now they refused to stay and be slaughtered for the glory of the communists. This happens to all the communists who came to enroll in the International Communist Brigades, as I have already mentioned, who in coming here didn't know that once in them they would be totally at the service of totalitarian communism, and they would not be fighting for freedom, as they had imagined. Except for a few thorough communists who did all the Stalinist tasks, no other volunteer at this moment, it seems, is allowed to depart from the International Brigade. All the others remain until they get killed, because it is by their sacrifice that the glory of communism is built in Spain.

There is no doubt that the first volunteers that came to these Brigades, communists or not, were idealists. But for the communists, the idealists now seem to have run out. They don't find them anymore, not easily like at the beginning. The word has run around that the communists, mostly, are seeking cannon fodder to sacrifice for building up their party. And so now when they want to send some half a dozen volunteers to their Brigades they have to send anybody. And among these "volunteers" there are of many species. On some of them they have discovered the book of the Gestapo.

They came about a month ago in a group of sixty. And they were distributed in the different formations, and in the working places of the Communist Party. Then a communication came from Paris saying that among the sixty volunteers, there were twenty-four agents of the Gestapo. You can imagine the commotion that such news provoked, demonstrating how careful the Communist Party is choosing who serve them. At the present hour I am assured that sixteen of the twenty-four spies are under arrest. It has not been possible to discover the others, because at their arrival they were placed—thanks to accomplices who surely are in good positions of responsibility—under different names that they had, and now it is difficult to discover them.

The Honored Leaders of the Stalinist Bourgeois Cheka

The leader of the Cheka in Calle Córcega is a certain Martínez. He is the commissar of this place. Like the pigs of the Cheka, he knows to perform his job to perfection, even in cleaning the pockets of the prisoners of quality: three bankers, a judge and four fascists of distinction. They wanted to escape to France and who could help them? Better than the Cheka, nobody. Through crooked ways they arrived to the commissar Martínez, who, for the considered modest sum of 3,000 *pesetas* offered his help. 3,000 *pesetas* for each. But the trick didn't succeed, and the eight patriots were arrested at the border and brought here. Now the commissar Martínez, in order to save his post, used an old trick: he has arrested his secretary. But the judge and the bankers are furious against Martínez and threaten to get rid of him when they will be freed. And that will be soon, as the fascists with money don't remain long in prison under the reign of the Stalinist-bourgeois Cheka.

Meanwhile in the cells the poor bankers suffer enormously. They receive everything they want to eat from the outside, and get drunk with the best wines, in the company of their girl friends, who in order to save them from sadness, lie down with them in what

seems a continuous orgy, while our comrades for three weeks have been kept in strict isolation, not even permitted to receive food, as to bring them food is the equivalent to be arrested; being also devoured by lice, as they have not been allowed to change linen in all that time. And the wife of one comrade is in another jail, with a child of a few months for wanting to help the two volunteers to get out of Spain, in the same way that the government had helped them in entering clandestinely in order to enroll them in the Garibaldi Battalion, now forbidden to leave it as if they were slaves of the communists.

And here I conclude this information on the customs and method of the murderous Stalinist and bourgeois Cheka which has installed itself in this unhappy Spain. I have presented here documented facts which anybody can judge. I have to state once more that the Spanish Communist Party is the major entity responsible for the advance of the counter-revolution. But I must state also that in this repression the communist masses in general don't participate, at the end being themselves the victims, after the masses belonging to the other parties. Because the counter-revolution is made up mostly of the police forces of the communist-socialist and republican State. It is the reaction of the State which is becoming ever more than a totalitarian State... in the name of democracy, and of the Republic of the Popular Front, which of "democratic" and "popular" has only the names, as in all repressive States.

What will come out of this civil war? Will there be another 19th of July 1936? This is the unknown. And this is our hope!...

November 1937.

On the Libertarian Book Club

The L.B.C. was founded (to the best of anyone's reckoning) in 1946, by anarchist exiles from fascist Europe, mostly Jews and Italians. At that time, the word "libertarian" was basically synonymous with "anarchist" or "anti-authoritarian" — although with a more intellectual and perhaps slightly euphemistic ring. One of the founders, Jack Frager, had actually known Emma Goldman, so we could claim an unbroken lineage back to the "classical" era of revolutionary anarchism.

Although the Book Club had actually printed a few books over the years, its primary activity was by then a monthly discussion series, hosted by the lefty Jewish fraternal organization Workmen's Circle in the rec room of one of the Penn South buildings.

Not surprisingly, the L.B.C.'s real decline began after 9/11, with its unleashing of paranoia and war fever. By then, we had lost our meeting space as Workmen's Circle moved out of the Penn South complex. For a while, we met at the Brecht Forum (aka the New York Marxist School) in the West Village, and at the Living Theater on Clinton St. But sometime around five years ago, the Anarchist Forum sputtered out. The Muste Institute, facing the prospect of expensive repairs on the old building at Lafayette St., rightly requested that we vacate the office.

Last year the Anarchist Forum rose from the ashes (now office-less, in the age of social media). I organized three discussions, back at the Brecht Forum space. I spoke about anarchist perspectives on the Libyan war and the Arab Spring; Peter gave a talk on the poignant question, "Does Anarchism Have a Future in the 21st Century?" And we gave a focus-group screening for Wall St. Occupiers of the soon-to-be-released film "Who Bombed Judi Bari?" — on the 1990 terror attack in California on ecologi-

cal defenders struggling to protect some of the last old-growth redwoods from the timber barons.

A libertarian left movement wouldn't have to adhere rigidly to 19th-century anarchist dogmas. But it would have to be fundamentally serious about freedom — rooting for the protesters, not the despots, in Syria and Iran and China and Russia; unequivocal on "libertine" or "lifestyle" issues like (yes) cannabis legalization; testing the limits of police control rather than acquiescing in it; and functioning (as O.W.S. does) with an ethic of internal democracy.

I don't know if the Libertarian Book Club's Anarchist Forum series will resume in 2012. But, for the sake of humanity's future, the libertarian left tradition deserves a political renaissance. And now, for the first time in my conscious life, I think it stands a fighting chance to get one.

excerpted from
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